ENCOUNTER

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JUNE 1957. VOL. VIII. NO. 6

Published monthly at Panton House 25 Haymarket London SW1
3s. per number. Yearly subscription 36s.: U S & Canada $7.00: India 12 rupees
U S and Canadian subscriptions may be entered at British Publications Inc.
30 East 60th Street New York 22

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Ben Morreale

"Let There Be Dances . . . ."

A Day with Danilo Dolci

I FIRST heard of Danilo Dolci in the village of Racalmuto, in Sicily, where I had been visiting the sulphur mines of the region. When I mentioned that I was going to Partinico to see him, all my friends in the village were as one trying to dissuade me. This is the region of bandits and the men of the Mafia; it is best to keep away, they said. Had not a bus been held up in the best 19th-century style a few months before, on the road between Sciacca and Palermo?

The morning I left the village, Vincenzo, one of the village's many diplomaed, certified, and unemployed teachers, walked with me to the station up on the hill.

"Now that winter is coming, they will start robbing," he said.

I asked him whom he meant by "they".

"Those who were working during the harvest, and now that winter is approaching there will be no work. It has been that way for a long time now. The peasants still say, 'After Christmas there comes hunger.'" He waved his hand towards the valley: "With a little bit of bread and some common sense this land could become a paradise."

It was the middle of November and the men still wore the handkerchiefs tight around their heads and rode shirtless in the sun.

". . . That is what Danilo says, anyway," Vincenzo said.

Before coming to Sicily I had seen little releases, hidden in the newspapers as if ashamed, of a man who had staged hunger strikes with the hope of finding work for the unemployed. But it was the unemployed teacher of Racalmuto who spoke to me for hours about Danilo Dolci and his friends.

"Not long ago he organised a *sciopere alla riverscio*—a reverse strike. He and the unemployed of Partinico and Trapetto went out to repair a road in the section called Valguarnera, not far from Partinico. It was a much-used road and it needed repairs, badly. Danilo had told all the workers to bear no arms. It was to be a peaceful demonstration; even pocket bread-knives were to be left at home and the noonday bread was to be broken by hand. Early in the morning little groups of men carrying shovels, pick-axes, and pushing wheelbarrows began to gather at the road. There was to be music, too, for Danilo called it '*la festa del lavoro*.' The work had hardly begun when the police arrived, arrested Danilo and a few others, and dispersed the rest. Danilo was arrested for resisting public force. He was later refused provisional freedom on the basis that he had 'a capacity to lead people to delinquency.'"

Vincenzo went on to tell me of the trial. It lasted six days, from the 24th to the 30th of March, 1956, at which time Danilo was freed with a light reprimand. But only after practically all of the men of letters in Italy came

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to his defence; notable among them were Carlo Levi and Elio Vittorini.

As Vincenzo shook my hand, he said, "Well, you go to Partinico and see for yourself. And don't let these people worry you with their talk of Mafia and bandits. We have it here, too, but we simply call it thievery; in Danilo's region they call it banditry—for that was once the land of Giuliano."

DANILO DOLCI has been working in Sicily among the "bandits" of Partinico for over five years now. He is the son of a railroad man who at one time held a post in the province of Palermo. However, Danilo, as everyone calls him, is a man of the north, an architect by profession. He had first come to Sicily as a student of architecture to study the temple at Segesta situated on the road that runs from Palermo through Partinico and on to Trapini. Passing through the region of Partinico, he saw the misery, gave up his studies, and remained in that region of Sicily where banditry reaches its peak.

Here in the region of Partinico, Trapetto, Montelepre, he saw human misery and he recorded it. Out of 5,959 families in Partinico, 1,800 are to be found on the poor list which entitles them to 1,000 lire (11s.) a month. Infant mortality in 1947 was 8·1 per cent; in 1953 it was 8·9 per cent. He found the land divided into such small lots that the people of the region laughingly say it is "pulverised" among the people. A good portion of the landowners (11,518) average a profit of 50 lire a day. Labourers' earnings average 600 lire a day. There are 3,000 unemployed. There are no public washing troughs. Many streets are without sewerage. Where there is water, it runs for only four hours a day, often through a piping system that is broken and leaking. The price of a prostitute ranges from a maximum of 200 lire to a minimum of 50 lire.

He saw the banditry, recorded it, and tried to explain it. In the region of Partinico, Trappeto, Montelepre, with a total population of 33,000, there were 350 outlaws. Of these 350 outlaws, only one had had parents who had reached the fourth grade. The "bandits" themselves had a total of 650 years of schooling and 3,000 years of jail. The State expends 13 million lire each month in that region only, to suppress this banditry.*

These then are a few of the statistics that Danilo has compiled. Yet he is not simply an accountant of misery, for he has become an integral part of the region. A few years back he married a widow of Partinico with five children. To understand this act, one must realise that a widow is the most despised state a woman can fall into in Sicily. Significantly, the Sicilian word for widow is *cattiva*, or "the bad one." Yet there are few homes in Sicily where more love and harmony reign than in the house squatting in the section called Spina Santa (The Holy Thorn) where Danilo and his family live.

THE BELL rang and at the door was a gaunt young man, looking much like Savanarola, yet handsomer. I shook his hand and said I was glad to meet Danilo Dolci,

"I am not Danilo," he said. "Danilo had a flat tyre. He will be along in a short while."

This was Ugo Piacentini, a former teacher of Latin and Greek to the "proper girls of Pisa," as he put it, who had come to Sicily to aid Danilo in his work. I couldn't help asking why he had left a job (a goal to be envied in the crowded circles of unemployed teachers in Italy) to come to Sicily.

He shrugged his shoulders. "If a man has a conscience. . . ."

While waiting for Danilo we talked and I saw that there was a motivating philosophy behind Ugo. It was the philosophical writings of a Pisan professor called Aldo Capitini, writings which Ugo mentioned and which later I found explained so much of Danilo's activity.

Professor Capitini expounds an "open" religion which does not admit that reality is only that which we see with the eye. This sort of reality of the eye leads to a "closure of the being." This closure is transformed

* Those interested in statistics may be referred to *Banditi a Partinico*, by DANILO DOLCI, Editori Laterza, Bari, 1956.

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into inertia and indifference, whereas religion is an open embracing of truth liberated from evil (sin, death, pain). To arrive at this state of truth liberated from evil which is true reality, the vehicle is "openness" as opposed to "closure." This openness is love, a sincere willingness to use the familiar "*Tu*" to all human beings, willingness to heap sacrifice upon sacrifice for the lowest, the willingness never to use violence, so that joy increases. From this, one will reach the reality which deserves the name of eternal, intimate reality.

"It is difficult to explain in five minutes," Ugo said.

"But what made you come to Sicily?" I said.

"I heard of Danilo. He wrote. He gave figures. I was a student of Capitini in Pisa and...."

The knock on the door interrupted him. Framed in the doorway that now looked smaller was a big man, his coat draped over his shoulders like a cloak. He was smiling and I could see a silver tooth far in the corner of his mouth. He held up his grease-stained hands.

"Have you ever tried to change a tyre in the early morning?" he asked as he shook my hand with his little finger. After he had washed, he shook my hand. "*Carissimo* Morreale, we are glad to see you."

In a few minutes he lapsed into the familiar "*Tu*" and then asked if I minded this. Indeed, one no longer felt the need to address him in the polite "*Lei*."

"So you want to know why there is banditry in Sicily?" His oval quarter-sized glasses hung on his round nose. He pushed them up to his eyes and he started speaking rapidly, from time to time touching my arm and saying, "You see, *caro*?" or "Is this not so?"

BANDITRY in Sicily, Danilo felt, stems from two sources: unemployment and illiteracy. Unemployment as a cause is rather obvious. Illiteracy, perhaps, is not as obvious. Yet this maintains the people at such a low, nearly primitive intellectual and cultural level that ancient traditions of individual justice easily maintain themselves. Danilo gave this as an example: A good part of the men who have taken to the hills are those who have killed and have had to flee. There had been sixty killings in the province of Palermo since the beginning of the year and the year was not over yet. Often these killings came about because a man had taken offence at a word, or even a look, addressed to his woman. It is almost understandable, in a land where a man possesses little else but a woman. If that property is touched, he is left with nothing. He *is* nothing.

Yet a more profound cause for banditry and misery, Danilo reasoned, was "the closing of one's conscience to the lowly of this world. You see, *caro*, banditry and misery are a shame upon the human race, for they come from indifference."

His glasses had slipped down his nose again and he stopped talking. He smiled over them. "We know what can be done." And then he used the phrase I had heard so often: "Sicily could be turned into a paradise if it were not for inertia. First we must surmount indifference." He turned to Ugo. "Tell him about the pig."

And Ugo told us that once when he was interviewing the unemployed and the poor of the region, he had taken the Secretary of the Gentlemen's Club with him. Ugo had taken him along to show him the conditions under which the poor lived. They entered a home: one room, dirt floor, four children, a sick grandmother in the only bed in sight, no one working in the family. As they spoke, they heard a rumbling under the bed. They were about to leave when from underneath the bed came snorting a thin, hairy pig. Once outside, Ugo turned to his companion asking how the well-to-do of the town could stand by and do nothing in the midst of such ignorance and poverty. The Secretary of the Gentlemen's Club looked quite surprised and said, "My dear young fellow, that man is not poor. He has a pig."

DANILO'S great hope is to have a dam built in the valley of Partinico, a dam that would catch and store the winter rains

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which now run free to wash away the best soil. Such a project would bring industry and develop the cultivation of citrus fruit, and thus give year-round work to the unemployed. But this is not enough. Illiteracy and all that stems from it must be wiped out. Schools must be set up for the young and the old, and they must have the opportunity to attend. Books must be put into their hands. Give people a chance to hear good music, to see good films. Let there be dances.

"We have tried everything," Danilo said. "I wrote letters, went from official to official; no one wanted to do a thing. That is why we had a hunger strike. We just sat on the beach meditating, and promised not to eat for one week. Then the police came and asked if we had a permit. We were pushed off the beach and finally dispersed. That is why we had our work strike. You know about it. They wanted to put me in jail for a long time. We must shake these people out of their apathy with a *bombe profonde*."

"Then you are for the use of violence when all other methods fail?" I said.

"No, no, no, no. Violence has been used too often and has begotten no good. I mean profound *spiritual* bombs. Gandhi was right, *caro*. Yet we must not repeat him like so many parrots."

Suddenly he arose. "Come, we shall take you to Partinico. We have much to do. You might help."

IN ABOUT an hour we entered Partinico with its cube-like houses painted with blue-wash to keep away the flies. The main *piazza*, or *chiazza*, as it is called in Sicilian, was crowded with men walking arm in arm in spite of the fact that it was late morning of a working day. To the left were a group of sullen young men clustered around the modern Agip gas station watching the attendant fill a German tourist's dusty Mercédès-Benz. Beyond, two young policemen in khaki field uniforms, their hat straps in their teeth like bits, strolled down the street, light machine-guns slapping against their backs with every step they took in perfect unison.

We drove down the *chiazza* for a while, looking into the streets that run perpendicular to the square: straight rows of blue-washed houses squat on the cobblestoned streets that slant to the centre in a sharp V. The V-shaped streets catch the water and waste thrown from the doors and windows and carry it off. Yet a wide riverlet of grey watery residue remains.

The streets looked all alike as we passed: squat blue houses, khaki-coloured cobblestones, and the straight line of glue-like water running down the middle.

The house of Danilo is on one of these streets. It is blue and has two storeys. On the first floor there is Danilo's office: a table to the left crowded with papers, reviews, and books. An old typewriter is on the floor. On the walls are detailed maps of Sicily and vivid, delicate oil paintings, all by the same painter. On the right is a cot. Two chairs have a pushed-in look. On the map there are blue pins marking Palermo, Trapetto, Cáccamo.

No sooner had we sat down than two young men followed by a well-dressed boy came in. One was Alberto, a young man in his early twenties who had come from Florence to work with Danilo. The second was Salvatore who ran the kindergarten in the converted stable below. Danilo introduced him as "a happy intelligent man." The third was a student of the region who had come to see Danilo. For a moment he hesitated.

"You may speak," Danilo said. "These are friends."

The boy had come to ask Danilo if he could find him a job, for he was near the end of his studies and the affairs of his family did not permit him to continue. Danilo nodded as the boy spoke and then explained that he would help him if he could; however, the task was not to help individuals, but the people as a whole. If he would like to come along, he might help in the work, and he took us all in with an embracing gesture of his arm as he led the way upstairs where the dinner-table had been set by the women. It was a long table set up in a T. Some children were already eating, even Mateo, a stern-looking boy whose murals I was later to see.

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There was no fixed time for the meal and the table was open to all, Danilo said as he told me to sit anywhere. There were ten children eating at the table. Danilo had a word for each one, joked, and talked seriously to them. I could not tell which were the members of the Dolci family and which had come in only for the meal. He introduced me to his wife who was busily feeding two small children. They were called Libera and Cielo. Later I found out they were the latest additions to the Dolci family.

We ate our meal of spaghetti with tomato sauce, and greens and tomato salad. Before Danilo left he embraced the children, then hugged his wife heartily, calling her "my treasure." It was a strange sight in Sicily, where a woman generally is looked upon as a necessary evil and where the only sign of affection I had seen up until then was a man who called his wife by her first name.

WE LOADED Danilo's old car with tables, chairs, a mattress, one cot, sheets, baskets, and the luggage of Ugo and Alberto, and we left for Borgo di Dio, the settlement built by Danilo and the people of the region. In fifteen minutes we were at the turn-off, a road sliced in a ridge and leading to the cluster of houses on the plateau which Danilo had named "Borgo di Dio." We each took some part of the load and walked up the path to the home of the farmer 200 yards up. Danilo had given the land surrounding Borgo di Dio to a family from Trappeto. He told me he had found the mother living in a hut with five children—all mentally ill. The smallest one had been sucking his bloody hand, for he had been gnawing at it since his mother's breast had run dry. From the sturdy two-storey house where the mother and children now lived I could see Trappeto, the fishing village below, clustered grey near the beach. On either side and in the distance stretched out two arms of land, Capo San Vito to the left and Terassini to the right. They seemed about to embrace the Gulf of Castellamare, blue in the sun, while powerful motor-boats left white wakes in its stretched-still waters as they darted about Trappeto like so many horseflies in the now hot afternoon sun. There were a few clouds behind us, near Alcamo, but before us the sky was cloudless and in November the warm sun felt good.

Ugo pointed to the motor-boats out in the gulf. "But we always have these to remind us."

The motor-boats were sea pirates, Danilo explained. Some called them "The Mafia of the Sea." These boats came from Palermo to fish the waters around Trappeto. They fished for the undersized fish, *apena nati*, as they are called, which brought good prices in the more luxurious restaurants. To facilitate their task, they usually fished with dynamite. This wanton practice is emptying the bay of fish, with the result that the honest fishermen find the banks diminishing from year to year, and find it more and more difficult to sustain life from their catch. Danilo had attempted to stop the illegal fishing, but as he said, the Mafia is difficult to deal with, whether it be within the law or not, and whether it be on the sea or on land.

Danilo was quiet for a while, then we turned to visit Borgo di Dio's *asilo*, or nursery school, a one-storey building of stone. Inside, the tile floor was clean, the walls were smooth and white. The two large rooms were connected by a graceful arch that had something Arabic about its curve. The pictures on the walls were low, eye-level for the children.

The boys and girls came running in from the fields where they had been playing. There were about twenty-five, ranging in age from three to six, dressed in printed smocks. A little blond boy came running up to me. "*Iu sugnu n' trumpetta.* I am a trumpet," he repeated, and pointed to a trumpet embroidered on his smock. Then the others began shyly to speak: "I am a butterfly." "I am a rose...." The young woman teacher came in and explained that it was a method of assigning desks and coat-hangers. Each child's hanger had painted on it an emblem which corresponded to the one embroidered on their smocks. It was easier to keep their things together and at the same time to teach them new words, she said.

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Up the path was the theatre capable of holding about a thousand people. The outside walls were still placarded with announcements of Gogol's "The Inspector General," a play put on by the people of Trappeto. Inside the theatre the walls were bare, yet on two sides there were unfinished murals with a strange Japanese quality about them: delicate designs of budding flowers, and young tomato plants protected by cactus leaves. Ugo said that a fourteen-year-old boy was doing them—the boy who had been at the dinner-table with us. "They are not finished yet, but then all of our work has stopped because of the arrests and trials. We have lost a lot of time."

Ugo said that they had tried to show films that were not of "shock." They had shown the films of Fellini, "La Strada," and most of the Chaplin pictures. The village cinema, though, had been giving them trouble, for Danilo's theatre was free.

One room in the back of the theatre was the library: about seven shelves of books which Ugo set about arranging. Behind the theatre was the school which Ugo was to organise for the fishermen of Trappeto. We helped bring in tables and chairs. As we brought in the last chair, Danilo suggested that since he had so many of us together at once that day, why not move the piano for the nursery school? So Danilo, Alberto, Ugo, and I lifted the upright piano and, in little mincing steps, carried it across the fields, through the olive trees, and into the school while all the children clapped their hands.

BEFORE we left, Danilo counselled the *asilo* teacher to see Ugo had his soup at least in the evening. "He is the kind that forgets to eat. If we don't take care of him, we won't find him the next time we come."

As we turned on to the main road which led to Palermo, we passed a man riding his mule to Trappeto. Danilo yelled to him.

"How is the fishing going?"

"Badly," answered the man, "badly."

Danilo turned the car toward the mountains and we headed for Palermo. From the rear window I could see Ugo up on the ridge looking down at Trappeto.

We climbed steadily through bare splintered mountains. The road wound higher and the engine of the old Fiat developed a loud squeak.

"They say that in American hotels one presses a button for any sound one desires: crickets, birds, sea breakers. Is that true?" Danilo asked.

I said I didn't know.

"Well," he went on, "we have a car with crickets, free. It would be a shame to take them out."

The mountains rose straight around us now. Through the valley we could see Montelepre like a handful of fava beans cradled in the suede-brown hills.

Minutes later we were driving through Monreale down the winding road, catching glimpses of Palermo stretched out multicoloured in the sun. All the way Danilo had been talking quietly with Alberto. I could see that Alberto was, if not worried, at least preoccupied as to how he was to work. He was a young man from Florence, of a good family. He spoke Italian well and by his dress and mannerisms showed all the signs of good training and upbringing. How was he, a man who did not speak Sicilian, to win the confidence of these people who would look upon all his qualities as suspect?

The closer we came to Palermo, the more nervous he became. We entered Palermo, drove to the centre, and stopped on one of the principal streets. In the busy street no one paid much attention as we unloaded the material for Alberto's school: two tables, four chairs, a cot for him to sleep on, and his valise. Danilo took one table on his back, and with one chair in his hand, disappeared into an alley so narrow that the table he was carrying bumped on its walls as he walked. We unloaded the rest of the materials and for a moment stood there waiting. Finally Alberto said, "Let us go."

We piled the chairs and the valise on the table and walked into the alley. Half-way down we heard the shouting and the rumbling. We turned to the right and before us

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lay Cortile Cascino. My first desire was to look away. We stood on a slight rise. Before us, in a city square block, was an ant-heap of humanity churning within itself, shouting, roaring. Below, near us, a man was building a wall of rocks. He scraped in the mouse-grey dirt. Up farther, children urinated and evacuated on dump-heaps. They all looked alike, swollen bellies, warped, wrinkled legs, their large heads swaying as if too heavy for the thin bodies. In their midst a young man, the right part of his head completely bald as if the hair had been torn out, his pimply ulcerated back bare in the sun, lifted a festering foot to bathe it in a basin. A barefoot girl ran to the only fountain at the edge of the cortile to fetch more water.

Here and there garbage heaps rose out from among the people. There were no streets and the shacks, shelters, and lean-to's were put up wherever a man could find space. One family had burrowed in the rock that bordered the left side of the cortile.

I looked down and then realised that a woman had been yelling at us.

"What are you coming here for? Away with you!" Her voice was high-pitched. ". . . then you'll take pictures and send them to America and let them think we are all poor and dead from hunger here. Get away from here!"

I smiled and saw Alberto smiling too, but I am sure we didn't know why. We picked up our load and walked across the Cortile. As we advanced the crowd parted in front of us, asking if we were going to set up school. Others asked what we were and the answers came from all around us.

"They are Polish." "They are Hungarians." "No, you can see they are English." "Protestants they are."

We were only halfway across when four men came toward us and took the load from us, asking where we wanted it. Every one of them bore the traces of smallpox. In the background I could still hear the woman screaming.

AT THE other end, from the doorway of a hut, Danilo motioned to us. Overhead, grey laundry, thickly freckled with black flies, hung like banners in mourning. A gaunt man stared at us from a window, his face covered with flies, and he did not move. The crowd heaved with us to the shack. Alberto and I followed the men in the door. Inside it was small: an entrance where Alberto and I could barely move about, then a room six by twelve feet, crowded with the four men who had helped us with the furniture. I saw Alberto looking around, as if he were already placing his cot in the corner and folding it every morning, setting up his classroom, which at most could hold twelve, if they all stood up.

Through the window I could see the heads of the crowd, mostly young girls peering in at us and saying, "It will be damp in there. The sun never reaches this side. Are they really going to start a school here? It is a poor place."

We were introduced to the men who had helped us. As I shook the hand of the last one, a fat man with a pock-marked face and a festering cauliflower ear, Danilo said quietly, "This man has in his pockets the cards of three political parties. He is a man of politics."

The man said, "Please, Danilo," as any modest man would when he is flattered in public.

The new school was crowded now, yet there were only fourteen people, all standing. Alberto stood in one corner, pinned in by a cluster of boys and girls all asking questions in Sicilian. He looked frightened, not for some physical reason, but I could see that he could not understand the people he had come down to teach.

I pushed across the room, shook Alberto's hand, and wish him, "*Auguri*—the best of luck."

He smiled feebly. "*Auguri?*"

Then everyone in the room started to shake my hand as I started to leave, asking me if I were Hungarian, Polish, or English. I shook my head at all of their questions. Danilo had mentioned not to let people know that I was American. "We don't want them to think that we have money, that we can work

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miracles. *They* must work the miracles themselves."

As we walked out across the cortile, the woman was still sweeping in front of her doorway. When she saw us approaching, she started screeching, "Go away. What have you come here for?"

We continued walking towards the little alley which led out of the cortile.

"Answer me!" she yelled. "What are you going to do, start a school?" And before Danilo could answer, she continued, "We don't need schools, you hear? We don't need them. We don't need them."

As we passed her Danilo said, "*Benissimo, signora, benissimo.*" It was then that I noticed her house was a little elevated and indeed was the only real house in the cortile. It was whitewashed and had around it a four-foot wall with a small opening as a door, where she stood holding her broom like a spear.

It felt good to be outside again. In a few minutes, walking, we were beside the Theatre Massimo, the third largest lyric theatre in Italy, the Palermians say.

Danilo during our walk spoke as if to himself. "You see, *caro* Morreale, we have been called many things since we came. They've called us crazy. They've called us Communists. They've even called us Protestants." Regaining the confidence of the people preoccupied Danilo. He felt they had lost the people since the work strike, during which many persons were arrested and tried. It is understandable, he said, in a land where the police are feared traditionally, almost instinctively.

"Now we must begin all over again," he said. Then he smiled. "Not *all* over, for at Borgo di Dio we have a settlement where once there was nothing but rocks." He shook my hand. "Come and see us again, *caro* Morreale, and stay a few months with us."

He turned and walked into the flow of people, his huge frame for a moment bouncing above the crowd, and he disappeared. Then I realised that it was already night.

DANILO DOLCI through his activities and writing has made a mark in Italy. His *Banditi a Partinico*, touching interviews with the "bandits" written in Sicilian dialect and buttressed by statistics gathered by himself and his followers, is now in its third edition. He has brought the near-to-death poverty, the injustices which exist in Sicily to the attention of the authorities, through these writings, personal letters, and appeals. Only when these failed did he turn to hunger strikes and strikes in reverse. For he is not a man of violence, nor a man of politics. His aim is to stop talking about bettering the lot of the miserable and impoverished of Sicily and to act immediately. In his method of non-violence, in his general attitude of passive resistance to evil, Danilo consciously leans upon the experience of Gandhi, and perhaps with good reason. Indeed no other activity or philosophy has alleviated the misery in Sicily. Elio Vittorini, one of the many writers who testified in Danilo's favour during the trial, and who is Sicilian himself, pointed out that Danilo's work in the North would surely seem ridiculous. But Sicily, he testified, resembles India in many ways. There exists in Sicily the same profound separation of classes, the same class segregation: the mass of peasants in Sicily have a sensitivity basically religious, not different from the popular masses in India. There are dozens, continued Vittorini, of such men as Danilo in India. The government helps them, it does not imprison them, for these men roam to the most isolated and impoverished regions, bringing them into the state by peaceful means. Indeed Sicily should have a dozen Dolcis, whom the government should aid and not harass.

Elio Vittorini was one of the many intellectuals who came to the aid of Danilo. If Danilo does not have the co-operation of the state, he does have the sincere good will of the intellectuals. However, what is more important, he has the young people such as Ugo and Alberto who think, reflecting about a new and young active philosophy and there is a freshness about them; a hope.

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Letter from New York

A Mixed Bag

WE HAD an inordinate number of suitcases and packages. Well, nine to be exact. And at the Customs counter, eight of them were accumulated; only I couldn't remember which one was missing. Finally an official of some kind approached me and asked: "Are you waiting for a leather briefcase?" "Why, yes," I replied, "that's the one." "It's been stuck in the conveyor belt," he assured me. "We'll have it for you in a moment. Can I see your customs declaration?" On it he scribbled some hieroglyphic signs, I couldn't imagine why. He then left, returning in a moment with the laggard case. It took a few minutes more before one of the inspectors got around to dealing with me. Those hieroglyphic signs interested him. "Which piece got stuck in the belt?" he asked solicitously. I pointed to the overstuffed briefcase, which he silently gathered up and carried away, behind a distant partition. Spotless as a lamb, I nevertheless felt those stirrings of guilt which suspicious officialdom can always evoke in me; the mark of an overexposure to Kafka, perhaps. When he returned, he inquired politely of me: "Do you have a travelling clock in this bag?" No, I didn't own a travelling clock. . . . The wild fancy seized me that someone, doubtless by error, had planted a time bomb in my luggage. But the inspector remained unperturbed; he proceeded to go through the briefcase, article by article, meticulously. Ah hah! Triumphant, he held in his hand my four-year-old son's clock, a gaudy little thing with a chicken that pecked away each second. "Oh, Lord," I said apologetically, "I forgot all about that. It's such a trifle. I had no idea it made so much noise." "It's not the noise," he answered genially enough, "it's the luminous paint. Sets the geiger counter going." Geiger counter. . . . I felt lightly weak-kneed at this, my first encounter with The Thing. Outside, where my wife and children were waiting, I began to recount this extraordinary incident. "But we *do* have a travelling clock," my wife broke in. "You remember, the little folding one. It's luminous, too. I packed it at the bottom of your briefcase." I quickly bundled us all off, and away. Unwittingly, and in all my stupid innocence, I had smuggled an atom bomb into the United States.

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On the morning of the second day, I took my son to the marvellous Museum of Natural History, only a few streets down from the hotel where we were staying. He was as bored as I was by the sight of all those stuffed beasts. But what did startle me—I doubt that he noticed it—was the colourfulness of the humanity that flooded through the museum. Though I was born and bred in New York, my four years in lily-white England had left me disarmed before New York's kaleidoscope. (Yes, I know, there are the Jamaicans. But they are so few, by American standards, that an American in London doesn't even notice them.) I suppose there must be almost a million Negroes in New York now. And in the past decade, some seven hundred thousand Puerto Ricans have settled there. (That's right: 700,000.) Moreover, the Puerto Ricans range in colour from a seeming-pure *hidalgo* white to African black; and there was something exciting to the instincts—I leave it to the psychoanalysts to explain—in the endless parade of "mixed" couples with their even more mixed children. Nor was this colourfulness limited to skin pigment. Negroes and Puerto Ricans go in for flashy clothes and the gaudiest cars; the whole effect was dazzling. So unlike dear old Kensington. . . .

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On Amsterdam Avenue, I went into a fruit and vegetable shop. It was owned by a Puerto Rican —all the signs were in Spanish. I asked for a pound of "tom*ah*toes." The clerk's face crinkled, and then he giggled. "What kind fohrinner you are?" he asked gaily.

And in a nearby hardware shop, also Puerto Rican, the sales-clerk dropped a penny of the money I had given him. My eyes tracked it, as it rolled under a pram. But he only waved his hand and said: "Leave it for the sweeper."

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Sign in a smart Fifth Avenue hat shop: *Aquí se habla español.*

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However, New York's whites are not amused at the Puerto Ricans. They are A Problem. And, in truth, they are a problem. The Negroes, too, have been a problem of course, but in the past ten years or so New York had come to terms with it, more or less and willy-nilly. The Negroes, after all, are native Americans, not foreigners; they do speak English as their native tongue; and they are now being carried by a wave of indiscriminate prosperity to the shores of bourgeoissification, where all good Americans finally assemble. The Puerto Ricans are another matter. They speak Spanish, and Spanish-speaking people do not surrender their mother tongue as easily as do other immigrant groups in America—probably because their homeland is so close, and their connections with it are ever freshened. (There are, in the South-West, third-generation Mexicans who have achieved high public office in their cities or states, and who still speak a heavily accented English.) Also, there is the fact that they are said to be arriving in New York at the rate of some 40,000 a year, and it is predicted that this will continue indefinitely—Puerto Ricans have one of the highest ratios of population increase in the world, and as American citizens they are free to enter when and as they please. (To be sure, many of them go home, either with shattered hopes or full pockets; but not as many as 40,000 a year—or so white people believe, for there is no way of keeping count.) Above all, there is the fact that Americans are tired of living in a melting pot. Puerto Ricans are doubtless no more productive of criminality and juvenile delinquence than were the Irish and the Italians when they first came—though, one ought to add, that's a lot. But the level of tolerance for this sort of thing has dropped, as the standard of living has risen. The result is a flight to the suburbs by the urban middle class; while those who hang on in Manhattan send their children to private schools—just as in London, only there it is the white native-born working class one shuns.

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In view of the general fate of good intentions in our times, it is not surprising to discover that, prominent among those who are fleeing before the Negro–Puerto Rican wave in such cities as Chicago and New York, are the very university people who have been most valiant in the fight for equal rights and against discrimination. I found this particularly noticeable in the course of a visit to the University of Chicago, whose faculty successfully led the fight to end restrictive covenants on Chicago's South Side. These covenants now having been declared unenforceable by the courts, and intolerable by public opinion, the University is well on its way to becoming a white elephant in a coloured ghetto—for Chicago's Negro population, recruited from the South, is growing fast. The process is as simple as it is inexorable: a case of rape or two, a few armed assaults, some persistent vandalism, and the professors move either to the suburbs or on to some other university entirely, while the parents of prospective students turn their eyes elsewhere. Belatedly, both Columbia University in New York and the University of Chicago are investing huge sums of money in neighbourhood improvement, with the idea of building housing projects that, while interracial, will act as a kind of class barrier, using the middle-class coloured people to serve as a buffer against the rest. Whether this will work, no one yet knows. But it is interesting that, in the face of a problem so enormous, so complex, so intractable, the only solution that should be thought of is the purely defensive one of creating a *Festung Academica*. What apparently cannot be done is as weighty a comment on the American scene as what is. The federal and decentralised structure of American government leaves these matters for the cities to settle themselves, which they have neither the resources, nor the power, nor—municipal politics being what it is—even the intelligence to do. At the same time, the ideological commitment to democratic egalitarianism effectively inhibits any genuine reform movement from getting under way—no public spokesman is going to admit that this problem will not solve itself, or that some large-scale planning is necessary or desirable, lest he seem to display a lack of confidence in the American way of life. Indeed, no public spokesman—not Governor Harriman, nor Mayor Wagner, nor their Republican opponents—will ever be found conceding that the problem exists, for that may be taken as a slur upon minority groups, who have votes. The upshot is that "the world's greatest city" is slowly being transformed into a garish mixture of green-glass skyscrapers and brownstone slums.

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A friend here remarked that the most ingenious labour-saving device ever invented for the home is the maid. This device, alas, it is beyond the powers of American technology to provide. And freezers, garbage-disposal units, and washing machines do not add up to a satisfactory substitute, if only because they cannot sit with the baby. A maid, if she can be found, will cost some £900 a year, plus room and board. Only the really rich can afford them—and even the

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really rich can hardly find them, what with full employment and the general American prejudice against being put in a position that has an ineradicable tinge of social inferiority. In this respect, an upper-middle-class American (say, £4,000 a year) is underprivileged in comparison with his English counterpart (say, £2,500 a year) who can usually afford and obtain a "mother's help" at least. He is also underprivileged in another important respect: his holidays. Who can begin to reckon the cash value of the privilege of having Paris and Madrid and Rome so conveniently nearby?

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Has a history of the Korean war been written? I do not recall one, which reinforces my belief that it is the forgotten war of modern times. It may also, in retrospect, turn out to have been one of the crucial wars of this century, for it has revealed the political limits that confine—and, in the end, render futile—much of the sophisticated reasoning now going on about "new ways of war." This reasoning, which departs from the assumptions that (1) atomic weapons, especially tactical ones, are here to stay, (2) that the hydrogen bomb has made total war unthinkable, and (3) that a permanent "war aim" in the future will be the avoidance of just such a war, is well advanced in America. I spent an evening with a group of political scientists who had very thoughtful and refined ideas about "graduated" warfare, and about how, at each stage of a conflict, diplomatic and military objectives and means have to be redefined so as to allow a settlement to be achieved and ultimate catastrophe to be indefinitely postponed. Such ideas, apparently, are being vigorously circulated in the Pentagon and among the advisors to the National Security Council. I may be wrong, but my conversations with less exalted people lead me to think that this expense of intellectual energy is largely beside the point. For what, in effect, it envisages is a series of Korean wars, fought perhaps with tactical atomic weapons, but nevertheless rigorously limited in scope. And this is something, I am convinced, that no democratic political system can manage. (I also have my doubts about the non-democratic ones, as well, who are not nearly so immune to internal political pressures and tensions as they would like us to believe.) English opinion tends to look back on the Korean War with satisfaction, as a modest victory not too dearly bought. Americans look back in anger, frustration, and bitterness. They see only the third bloodiest war in American history fought to an inconclusive and whimpering end. Probably if English involvement had been as deep, English feelings would be as sore. In any case, a series of Koreas is simply ruled out as an American perspective—the people will not have it. They are not going to fight and suffer for ambiguous objectives; they are not going to permit their lives to be expended in accordance with secret, speculative calculations about how much blood will purchase how profitable a settlement; and if this is the prospect, they would infinitely prefer an "isolationist" solution that would clearly delimit American commitments and boldly promise an all-out war in defence of them.

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One after the other, they go off to California. I now have almost as many old friends on the West Coast, which I have never seen, as in New York, where I have lived most of my life. What it all means, or will mean, I do not know. But it is bound to mean *something*. The slow shift of the centres of American gravity toward the Pacific is one of those secular changes that defy the comprehension of the contemporary observer. From beyond the Rockies, Europe must seem even farther away than it is, and that is far enough. Does this mean that America, as a civilisation, is moving away from its European origins? If so, toward what? The question is obviously one that cannot possibly be answered as yet. But it is one of a family of questions that have popped up on the American agenda, all of them connected with America's fate, America's destiny, America's meaning. Among the younger American historians, in particular, there is an uneasy suspicion of all that has passed for American history till now. They are restless in the inherited categories, though as yet they see no way out of them.

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Several of my English friends are now gadding about the States on one excuse or another. How the visiting Englishman does love America! He may, when he returns home, write solemnly of the parlous state of civil liberties here, of the tyranny of public opinion, "witch-hunting," and all that; or he may pontificate on why it is that Americans, so filthy rich, are also so neurotically unhappy; nevertheless, *for him* America obviously offers a liberation and a happiness that England does not. More than one has in all seriousness assured me that New York's climate is more invigorating than London's, that he needs less sleep here and has more energy. I am sure this is a myth. But I have yet to meet an English visitor in New York who, however abstemious, did not show some of the signs of intoxication. This, no doubt, is what the Englishman in Paris was like fifty years ago—down to the very leer.

Irving Kristol

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H. R. Trevor-Roper

Arnold Toynbee's Millennium

ARNOLD TOYNBEE'S Bible—for so one can reasonably describe his ten-volume *Study of History*—has not been well received by the professional historians. I agree with them in regarding it as untrue, illogical and dogmatic. But in this essay I do not intend to argue its historical truth or falsehood, its logical coherence or incoherence, its empirical validity or invalidity. I intend to consider its significance as a document of our time. For true or false, logical or illogical, empirical or abstract, this book has excited a great deal of attention. Although every chapter of it has been shot to pieces by the experts, and although it is written in a style compared with which that of Hitler or Rosenberg is of Gibbonian lucidity, it has been hailed by the unprofessional public, at least in America, as "an immortal masterpiece," "the greatest work of our time," "probably the greatest historical work ever written." As a dollar-earner, we are told, it ranks second only to whisky. Its success has carried its already much-travelled author round and round the globe, lecturing, flower-crowned, from China to Peru. Surely this phenomenon requires some explanation. It is not enough to say that the work is intellectually erroneous. We must ask why such error has such a vogue. What is the meaning of Toynbee's message in the context of our time? To answer this question we must look at Toynbee's message in a different spirit from that in which most of his critics have regarded it. They were primarily concerned with its truth. They tested the validity of his arguments. I am now concerned with his meaning. What kind of a future does Toynbee (rightly or wrongly) envisage? What part, in the unfolding of history, does he invite us to play?

To understand Toynbee's message, it is important to remember the stages in which it was delivered and the events which were happening in the world at that time. For Toynbee's Bible was not delivered to the world all at once. It consists of two Testaments, separated from each other by some fifteen years—fifteen years which included the war of 1939–45. The Old Testament, which comprises volumes 1–6, appeared between 1932 and 1939. The New Testament, which comprises volumes 7–10, was published in 1954. Moreover, the New Testament ends with a remarkable volume, which sheds a great deal of light on the purpose and character of the whole work, volume 10 or the Book of Revelation. If we are to understand the message of Toynbee fully, we must examine his Bible in the order in which it was written, beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation.

NOW TOYNBEE'S general message, the message of his Old Testament, is simple and reasonable clear. His Book of Genesis is the story of the Fall of Civilisations. All civilisations, according to Toynbee, are comparable; all pass through similar stages; all flourish and decay

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according to the same general laws, the same general time-scale of growth and change; all ultimately die. There may be different forms of death. Some civilisations die sudden, violent deaths without living out their time; others may seem to linger on, but in reality they are dead, mere fossils of themselves. For there is no exemption from the law of mortality. Always there is an end, and our own Western Civilisation, which we once thought unique and immortal, is in fact no different from the others. It too must die. As a matter of fact, it must die very soon. Has it not already shown all the signs of senility, as diagnosed by the scientific doctor of civilisations? Did it not reach its peak 400 years ago? Are not 400 years the time invariably allotted, by the mystical mathematics of History, to the "Time of Troubles" which precedes the death of a civilisation? Is not our civilisation already visible in dissolution? Surely its end is near.

Such is Toynbee's general message. It is a determinist message. But it has another characteristic too. It is also a fundamentally obscurantist message. For although Toynbee, in analysing civilisations, claims to be dispassionate and scientific, in fact his whole analysis is governed by strong emotional prejudice. In spite of its Hellenic training, his mind is fundamentally anti-rational and illiberal. Everything which suggests the freedom of the human reason, the human spirit, is to him odious. This illiberalism again and again distorts his own logic. Terms which, for his "scientific" purpose, should be neutral, like "decline" or "decay," are by him given a moral significance and arbitrarily equated with the processes which he happens to dislike—i.e. the growth of liberalism or rationalism. So, in his Book of Genesis, the Fall of our Civilisation is dated from the time when our ancestors ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge and sought to be like gods, knowing good and evil—the time of the Renaissance. To Toynbee the Renaissance was the beginning of the irreversible decline of the West, and every further manifestation of human reason is to him yet another milestone on the road to ruin. Europe's greatest centuries, the centuries of the Reformation, the New Philosophy of the 17th century, the Enlightenment, the gradual conquest of disease and famine, are to him its darkest ages. The European Enlightenment of the 18th century, that incomparable period of human emancipation, the age of Bach and Mozart, Gibbon and Voltaire, is to him merely "a spell of low ideological temperature," a weary lull in the otherwise fatal course of Europe's disintegration and decay, a brief respite between "a first and a second paroxysm of its deadly seizure." The seizure, we may note in passing, was already deadly even before the lull. Europe's death was already decreed, not when industrialism or communism or the hydrogen bomb arose to threaten it, but when the Renaissance, that great spiritual disaster, descended like a fatal curse upon us. It was then that disintegration set in, then that that sentence of death was passed which is now, after the preordained term of 400 years, about to be executed upon us.

Is there then no hope? Can nothing stay our doom? No, says Toynbee, nothing. The best we can do is to find our way back into that Paradise of medieval innocence from which, by our fatal presumption, we have been expelled. Since it was the Renaissance and the Reformation which, by opening the eyes and the mind of man, set us on the 400-year slope leading to destruction, let us now seek to go back behind those fatal episodes, deny them and their consequences, pretend that they have never been. Let us confess that, for the last four centuries, we have all been miserable sinners. We have broken the holy eggshell of Catholic unity in which we had been happily and innocently enclosed, insulted the primitive taboos which before had kept us there, and crept out into the fresh, clear light of day. But now, thanks to the inspired "science" of the Prophet Toynbee, we have discovered that the daylight is misleading, the open air cold. Let us then, with devout hands, piece together the festering relics of that cosy shell and creep back again into its warm darkness. Who knows but that holy old hen, Mother Rome, though understandably somewhat stand-offish after such

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long insubordination, may consent to sit again upon her naughty but now penitent brood? We shall not reverse the iron laws of History, but perhaps we shall mitigate our doom. By sin came death. We cannot now escape the decree of death; but at least let us repent of our sin.

SUCH, in general, was the message of Toynbee's Old Testament. It is worth while to consider briefly its pedigree and its application to current affairs. For there is nothing very original about it, except the monstrous systemisation to which everything is subjected. The "decline of the West" is, relatively at least, an obvious fact—though with certain limitations to which Toynbee pays little attention. That is to say, the technical conquest and organisation of great land-masses by railways, motor power, and air transport has deprived the small maritime powers of Europe of one of their advantages and has mobilised instead the naturally far greater resources of huge, but previously unorganised, countries like America and Russia. But this shift in the balance of power has, of course, nothing whatever to do with the mere flow of time, the "ageing" of cultures, or the corroding effects of the Renaissance. It was remarked by geographers like Sir Halford Mackinder before Toynbee seized upon the same fact and, separating it from its real causes, ascribed it instead to the cosmic processes which he assumed. These cosmic processes have in turn another pedigree.

It is a German pedigree. The theory that all history is predetermined and that the stages between one predetermined phase and another are marked by catastrophic convulsions seems to be a peculiar product of the German mind. It was advanced by Hegel, by Marx, by Nietzsche; and in the 20th century, when great catastrophes seemed to be descending with particular force on Germany, it became, in varying ways, the orthodoxy of various German schools. For after the defeat of the First World War, in the aftermath of that exhausting struggle, surrounded by the *débris* of ancient empires, and faced with terrible social problems, it was easy and even natural for Germans to draw on these native ideas and imagine a universal catastrophe. So the Marxists, hating the "capitalist" West, announced with glee that a whole age was over. The West, with its culture, was finished, and must be transformed by conquest: conquest which must come from the new, non-Western power that had accepted the German doctrine of Marxism, Soviet Russia. Theirs was a confident message, because they hoped to be the heirs of the West, the beneficiaries and rulers of the new age. On the other hand conservative German intellectuals, drawing on the same tradition, accepted the same conclusions with much less glee. It was with wailing and gnashing of teeth that Oswald Spengler declared that the turn of the West had come: that "civilisations" were comparable and all mortal; and that the hour of dissolution for our civilisation was at hand.

It was at this point that Toynbee came in. An English amateur, tagging somewhat incongruously along behind these German professionals, he repeated Spengler's general theory. He was also a conservative, and as a classical scholar he loved the past: it was therefore with some sorrow that he envisaged the crumbling of an ancient order. On the other hand, as an obscurantist, moved by a detestation of human reason and its works, he clearly enjoyed a certain Germanic *Schadenfreude* in equating the decline of the West with the rise of rationality. This equation, one may add, was not new: it was a favourite equation of the obscurantist school of writers—Belloc, Chesterton, T. E. Hulme. Incidentally it is also inconsistent with Toynbee's general theory. For since Toynbee ascribes an equal time-span to all civilisations, regardless of their relative rationality, it is clear that decay, to him, is a function of age, not of reason. Still, it pleased Toynbee to make this equation: it enabled him to wring his hands with more prophetic gusto if he could say to a dying civilisation not only, "You are old, you have one foot in the grave, you shall surely die," but also, "You have sinned, your sins have found you out, you deserve to die! I told you so! Repent."

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Thus Toynbee's Old Testament, like the ponderous vaticinations of Spengler, can be seen as the obverse of Germanic radicalism, as the despairing wail of conservative defeatism. "The old order is perishing," cried the radicals, "it is doomed to perish. Let us give it one more knock, and it will be finished. Then the reign of the new ruling class will begin." Such has been the cry of radical revolutionaries at all times. It was the cry of the Anabaptists of Münster in the 16th century, of the English Saints in the 17th century. However, society is a good deal tougher than radicals suppose, as the Anabaptists and the Saints quickly found. When radicals scream that victory is indubitably theirs, sensible conservatives knock them on the nose. It is only very feeble conservatives who take such words as true and run round crying for the last sacraments.

FOR THESE reasons Toynbee's Old Testament was not taken very seriously in England. It was still only in Germany that such catastrophic views enjoyed any currency. And indeed in Germany they soon achieved a new lease of life. For although the Marxists proved unable to realise their dream of conquering Germany, another anti-Western radical party, which had stolen the Marxist thunder, was soon able to exploit the theory of "the Decline of the West." Adolf Hitler, like Spengler and Toynbee, was a student of history. Like them he ranged over the centuries and crammed such facts as he found it convenient to select into a monstrous system. The true facts of geography joined the rubbish of the philosophers in his head, and he saw himself as the Phœnix of centuries, the Messiah who would roll up one age of history and open out a new. The West, he said, was finished; but Germany was not, or at least need not be—if only it would repudiate the West. He would revive Germany by detaching it from the embraces of a dying civilisation. He would breathe into it a primitive, barbarian, irrational spirit. He would wrest from Marxist Russia the leadership of the new, non-Western, non-capitalist, non-rational age and establish a new empire over the ruins of the West. To demoralise his intended victims he assured them that the iron laws of "historical necessity" were on his side; and having demoralised as many as were frightened by such words, he gathered up his forces and, in 1939, he struck.

When the German legions marched over Europe, trampling on its liberties, it must have seemed to many that Toynbee's dismal prophecies were coming true. Surely this was the end of the West. Was it not written in the Holy Writ? Then if defeat was certain, was it not most sensible to accept it in its least painful form, by prompt surrender? So everywhere in Europe a class of men appeared who were not Nazis, or pro-Nazis, who did not relish the prospect before them, who were in fact conservatives, but who accepted as inevitable "the New Order" that was threatened from Berlin. The West, they said, was finished: why should it not surrender in the hope of saving at least those elements of Western Civilisation which were worth preserving? Freedom of all kinds could be sacrificed, provided the essentials of civilisation—the social hierarchy and the Church—were saved. We have sinned, such men cried, we have eaten the forbidden fruit; let us repent and retire out of history, leaving the future to the Nazi Millennium. In future let us be good and let who will be clever; we shall not try to think, but only to pray. The patron saint of such men throughout Europe was Marshal Pétain. He was the patron of all those whose will had been sapped by the messianic claims of Hitler and the dismal certitudes of Toynbee. For Toynbee, in so far as he had any influence, was the unconscious intellectual ally of Hitler in the non-Nazi world, the true prophet of European Petainism.

I say 'unconscious' because in fairness to Toynbee we must admit that he has no particular preference for a German conquest of Europe. He seems not to care who destroys the West, so long as the West is destroyed and thus vindicates his theory. Nor has he

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ever prophesied who will be its destroyer. Certainly he never foresaw that it might be Hitler. In 1936, after a long interview with Hitler, Toynbee declared himself "convinced of his sincerity in desiring peace in Europe." Even in 1939 he was blind, or indifferent, to the particular threat of Nazi Germany. For civilisations, he maintains, always succumb to internal age, not external blows; or at least external blows are only the occasion, not the cause of their dissolution. Even the Incas were not really destroyed by the Spaniards but because their civilisation had reached its logical term when the Spaniards arrived. The apparent destroyer is in fact not a destroyer but merely a demonstrator of internal rottenness. Still, by 1940, Hitler had proved himself a demonstrator of some capacity. If the West was really so rotten that it was about to crumble through natural decay, it was reasonable to expect that the first external knock would complete the process. This is what the Pétainists believed. It was naturally mortifying to them when, in spite of all the blows which it received, in spite of historical necessity, and in spite of the combined eloquence of Hitler and themselves, the West did not merely not crumble: it resisted; it was victorious; it survives.

What was Toynbee to do when faced with this unexpected survival of the civilisation whose doom he had so confidently pronounced? Change his views? That is too much to expect of any prophet. A slight reinterpretation is the most we can reasonably require. And sure enough, this is what we get. In 1954, after fifteen years of silence, Toynbee published his New Testament, and, in publishing it, admitted not indeed error—he has never admitted to any error—but a certain development in his views. In the past fifteen years, he writes, "my inner world had been undergoing changes which, on the miniature scale of an individual life, were for me of proportionate magnitude" to the vast changes which the great war of 1939–45 had caused in the world without.

What were these inner changes? Something of them had already been revealed, obliquely, in a public discussion which Toynbee had held in 1948 with the most formidable of his critics, the distinguished Dutch historian Professor Geyl. In this discussion Geyl had described Toynbee, on the basis of his Old Testament, as a determinist. To his surprise, he found that Toynbee now indignantly repudiated the charge. "With the awful warning of Spengler's dogmatic determinism before my eyes," Toynbee declared, "I always have been and shall be mighty careful, for my part, to treat the future of our civilisation as an open question." It was in vain that Geyl protested that this suspension of judgment simply does not exist in Toynbee's book: indeed "as regards the future, in one place in your book you are very near to drawing, as you put it, 'the horoscope of our civilisation' from the fate of other civilisations, and you suggest repeatedly that we have got into the disintegration stage which you picture to us so elaborately in your book as leading inevitably to catastrophe." Toynbee simply refused to admit this conclusion. All his arguments might lead thither, but now, suddenly, he refused to pronounce the final doom. He did not give any reason for this refusal to accept the only conclusion to which all his "laws" seem infallibly to lead. All he would say was that although he had established the laws under which all other civilisations have perished, and although he had shown that our civilisation too is subject to those laws and has now reached the stage at which death can hardly be postponed, nevertheless—who knows? Something may yet turn up. What? we ask. But we receive no answer. All we are told is that Toynbee is not a determinist. And he adds ("somewhat testily" we are told), "I suppose I must be the last judge of what my own beliefs are." To which one can only answer, "No doubt: but not of the rationality or consistency of those beliefs."

WHAT WAS the escape-clause which Toynbee, by 1948, had discovered in his own determinist system? For answer, we look to his New Testament, which he was meditating at that time in the light of those

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profound inner changes caused by the war, and which, six years later, was to be published to the world as volumes 7–10 of his *Study of History*. These volumes do indeed add a very significant message to the message of the Old Testament: a message not this time of despair but of hope—of a kind.

It is not that Toynbee sees any prospect of the survival of Western Civilisation as we understand it. On that point his message is unchanged. Not even the events of 1939–45 can change his eagerness to see "the West" destroyed, and indeed he seems at times positively impatient with those events for their obstinate non-conformity with his theory. Why, he seems to overhear us asking, did the West not crumble finally before the might of Hitler? Poof! he answers. Hitler was no threat at all—how could he have been if even the rotten West did not crumble at his touch? Hitler's armies were phantom armies only: it was only the decadent pacifism of Europe which made him appear formidable. He had not made Germany a military power, he had merely "coaxed, duped, and flogged" it "into being one degree less unwarlike than its neighbours." "In the realm of the blind the one-eyed man is king." Nor does Toynbee allow the war of 1939–45 to be a real war —had he not already committed himself to the assertion that the war of 1914–18 was the last major war of which enfeebled Europe, according to the Toynbeean Tables, was capable? So Hitler's war is dismissed as a mere "supplementary war," beneath the notice of the historical scientist, and therefore unable to disturb the perfect symmetry of those Tables. And finally, if the feeble Hitler let the Professor down by failing to establish universal domination over the ruins of Europe, let us not suppose that that was due to any resistance by the still feeble Europe. No. That was due to "a chapter of lucky accidents" such as no historian could or indeed should be expected to prophesy, and such—Toynbee adds with relish—as cannot conceivably occur again. Thus Hitler's war, which Toynbee had not predicted in 1939, was written off, after it was over, as an irrelevant "secondary war," a mere airshot which does not in the least invalidate the general theory that the West is ripe for conquest. It is inconceivable, we are assured, that our next assailant will repeat the "accidental combination of incidental errors" which led to Hitler's failure. Therefore let us not lose faith —faith in the gospel of our own inevitable defeat.

Where then, we may ask, is the novelty of Toynbee's New Testament? Where is that escape-clause at which he had hinted in his discussion, in 1948, with Professor Geyl? The answer is that the glad tidings of great joy which Toynbee now offers is not that Western civilisation as we know it can be saved. It is that something far more important than our rotten civilisation can be born out of its ruin. In the 1930's Toynbee had lamented the impending death of our civilisation because then, along with much that was rational and therefore bad, the good, irrational elements must also perish. He had therefore hoped against hope that by some modification, some deliberate weakening of the rational and strengthening of the irrational elements, the structure might be preserved. But now Toynbee has admitted the fragility, the logical weakness of any such hope. He has yielded at last to the pressure of his own determinist system. But he has been able to do so without reluctance because he has discovered a new, a very important and—to him—a consoling truth.

The truth which dawned on Toynbee in the years of Hitler's war, the years between the Old Testament and the New, is basically very simple. It is that human civilisations are not, after all, organic wholes. Their elements are detachable and can survive, as vital and vivifying parts, in other civilisations, in the "universal states" which shall succeed them. Why then, he asks, should we not separate the essential from the inessential elements, the good from the bad, and, having done that,

> *let determin'd things to Destiny*
> *Hold unbewail'd their way?*

Why should not our Western Civilisation go to its doom, the sooner the better, carrying with it the rubbish with which human reason

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has by now fatally deformed it, provided that the valuable parts of it, its primitive pre-Reformation faith, can be preserved as one of the vitalising ingredients of the new "universal state"? Surely this is a more logical, more positive, and (to some) more cheering conclusion than that desperate, defeatist proposal so feebly tacked on to Toynbee's Old Testament. Now there is no question of mere reaction. Now salvation will come not by forlorn retreat into the shrivelled womb of Mother Church, but by moving onwards on our predetermined path, which proves not to be so fatal after all. Our civilisation shall indeed perish; but what, after all, is civilisation? "Civilisations," we are now told, "have forfeited their historical significance except in so far as they minister to the progress of religion." Therefore, what does it matter how soon or by whom Western humanity is decimated, Western justice mocked, Western art and letters snuffed out, Western freedom abolished? Our religion—or rather, one strand of it: for Toynbee still seems to reject Protestanism—shall survive, not indeed alone or exclusive, but as part of a higher religion, the religion of a universal state.

SUCH is Toynbee's new Dispensation. It is, of course, not entirely new; for Toynbee's whole system is by definition repetitive. Therefore this new Dispensation too has a historical precedent. The precedent is taken, as always, from Græco-Roman civilisation. For although Toynbee claims to base his system on a number of past civilisations, in fact, as the critics have often pointed out, it is based on Græco-Roman civilisation only—the only civilisation which Toynbee has really studied and to whose pattern, as he interprets it, all other civilisations are now arbitrarily told to conform. So now the decline of the West must be made to resemble the decline of Greece and Rome, and the new universal Church, of which Toynbee is the prophet, must resemble the old Christian Church, in the days when it was new. The wheel of history has once again come full circle. The future is once again made clear by the past.

For did not the ancient pagan civilisation of the Hellenic world, obedient to the Toynbeean Laws, duly decompose? Were not its political forms—the independent Greek cities, the Hellenistic monarchies, the Roman republic itself—utterly extinguished? Did not the memory of its poets and philosophers happily fade away, burnt out of human recollection by the purifying fires of clerical bigotry, until the rot of the Renaissance allowed them to return? But did not the more essential parts of that civilisation, its mysteries and mummeries, its sacraments and sacrifices, Isis and Adonis and Mithras, happily survive, gathered up and preserved in that new syncretist religion, "that quaint Alexandrian *tutti-frutti*," as Norman Douglas once described it, Christianity? Even so, Toynbee tells us, our Western civilisation is now fast decomposing. We shall be conquered, destroyed, absorbed. Our political forms, our liberties, our culture shall be crushed out. But what of that? For our religious beliefs, which alone matter, will be preserved, pickled as one of the ingredients of a new syncretist religion, a new *tutti-frutti*, "a mish-mash," as one commentator has described it, "of the Virgin Mary and Mother Isis, of St. Michael and Mithras, of St. Peter and Muhammad, of St. Augustine and Jalal-ad-Din Mawlana." Such, we are now assured, is to be the new "universal religion" which will render political conquest a positive boon and will replace for all mankind the use of human reason and the remembrance of its great landmarks, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the New Philosophy, the Enlightenment.

But how is this new Dispensation to come in? Will our conquerors themselves bring it in? Certainly not. The Roman Emperors did not invent Christianity, they merely created a political system within which it was able to spread. The beginning of the new religion was quite separate. At a certain point in time during the decomposition of Hellenic society there arose a Messiah. The Messiah preached a Word, a Message, which altered the immutable sentence of the Book of Genesis and gave to mankind, predetermined to physical death, a new hope of spiritual life. Around

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this Message the disciples of the Messiah afterwards assembled and crystallised the miscellaneous mythology of other religions. Even so today the necessity of a new religion requires the appearance of a new Messiah: a new Messiah who, incidentally, has certain advantages over the old. For the old Messiah acted naïvely: he uttered his message, and his disciples slowly did the rest of the work, so that the new religion grew up, as it seemed, spontaneously, over centuries, obedient to impersonal laws. But the new Messiah can do better than that. Knowing the laws, he can himself operate them, or at least further their operation, much more expeditiously. He knows in advance what the final form of the new religion must be. He can foreshorten the centuries of change and preach the new religion, the new *tutti-frutti*, "the Mish-mash of the Virgin Mary and Mother Isis" all at once.

And who is to be this new Messiah? It surprises me that among so many commentators of Toynbee's work, none (so far as I know) has publicly posed or answered this question. And yet the answer seems to emerge clearly—only too clearly—from the text. It is true the Messiah is never explicitly named; even on this point the Prophet does not deviate into clarity; but discreetly and repeatedly, as the great work nears its end, he is identified until finally, there can be no mistake. In the tenth volume of his work, the last book of his Bible, his Book of Revelation, the secret is laid bare: the Messiah steps forth: he is Toynbee himself.

I KNOW that this statement will seem outoutrageous to some. It will be said that Toynbee is personally a modest and humble man and that this is to ascribe to him *hybris* and blasphemy. I do not wish to ascribe anything to him which does not seem to me to emerge inescapably from his published work. I shall therefore try to document the conclusion I have expressed.

First of all I should say that I am not impressed by Toynbee's alleged "humility." It is perfectly true that he himself often praises this virtue. "Spiritual humility," he says, is one of the distinctive signs of the great historian, and he congratulates himself on being free from that "blight of egocentricity" which has prevented other historians from seeing as far as he has done. This "contrite humility, the first of Christian virtues," has, he says, fortified him throughout his superhuman task, and it has also guided his hand in everything he has written; for "in the writing of a book, as in every other human endeavour, the worst of all vices is the *hybris* that is the nemesis of self-conceit. An author is convicting himself of being past praying for if ever he allows the Old Adam in him to close his mind to a suggestion for some modification of his first draft by answering, What I have written I have written."

Now this is all very well, but when we look further into Toynbee's work we find it very difficult to discover this "humility" of which he so regularly boasts. For instance, when has Toynbee ever modified his text in answer to criticism? Some very formidable criticisms were made of some of the arguments used in his early volumes. Has Toynbee ever paid the slightest attention to them or made the slightest modification of those arguments or their conclusions? His only reply has been to include, in his later volumes, a chapter of abuse against those purblind modern historians who, enslaved by a barren devotion to the minutiæ of their technique, have had the "*hybris*," the "sin," not to admit the validity of his historical laws. As for his claim to be free from "the blight of egocentricity," it is instructive to look at his last volume of all. There, in the index, it will be found that whereas the entry "History," which is, after all, the subject of the whole work, occupies only five column-inches, the entry "Toynbee, Arnold Joseph" occupies twelve column-inches, and there are separate entries for twelve other members of the Toynbee family who owe this distinction entirely to their relationship with the Professor. The "Acknowledgements and Thanks," too, which cover thirty pages, are awarded not only to the usual suppliers of information, correctors of proofs, and benevolent publishers, but to all who, since the

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beginning of History, have deserved immortality by contributing, each acording to his capacity, to that ultimate creation of the ages, the mind of Toynbee. Æschylus, Pindar, Aristotle are there; the Bible, St. Augustine, Fra Angelico have done their bit; thanks are conveyed to "the glory of God" and, on either side of it, to the also beneficent city of York and uncle William Toynbee. Plato is thanked for teaching the Professor "when, in a mental voyage, I found myself at the upper limit of the atmosphere accessible to Reason, not to hesitate to let my imagination carry me up into the stratosphere on the wings of a myth." William of Wykeham is thanked for having founded Winchester College and having thoughtfully "made this provision for me 507 years before I was elected a scholar of his college." It is clear, from such evidence, that Toynbee regards himself as a portent no less significant than his work. All creation has been groaning and travailing to produce him; Winchester College has at last, in him, achieved its purpose; the ultimate bounds of human reason have at last, by him, been pierced.

All this being so, I do not think we are obliged to ascribe to Toynbee that almost unnatural humility which he so often goes out of his way to claim. Or, at least, his humility must be relative: his own greatness must seem to him so clearly superhuman that it shows remarkable condescension in him to claim, in public, no more than unique mortal genius. As for the humility which he preaches as a necessary virtue of the historian, we are forced to conclude that he is not really thinking of himself at all: he is thinking of his critics. If only *they* were more humble, how much better it would be! Then they would not presume to criticise one who had so splendidly outsoared the shadow of their night.

Thus I do not consider it *a priori* inconceivable that Toynbee should regard himself as the Messiah. And in fact, if we examine the autobiographical part of his work in a little more detail, we can hardly help observing the repeated evidence that this is how he does regard himself. In fact we shall discover that Toynbee, unlike previous Messiahs who were lamentably careless in this respect, has made scrupulous provision for his future devotees. Having himself (since History—as he has shown—repeats itself) tasted almost all the experiences of his prototype, he has contrived so to record these experiences, their dates and places, that there will be no danger of heresy or error in such important matters. Tucked away in the corners of his New Testament, we can find the authentic record of everything that matters in his Life: the minor prophets who dimly heralded his coming ; the Holy Family; the precocious Infancy; the youthful Temptations; the missionary Journeys; the Miracles; the Revelations; the Agony. Moreover, looking forward as well as back, he has, by considerately recording the places he has visited and the objects he has touched, made provision for a constant traffic in those pilgrimages and relics upon which the religion of the Mish-Mash, like all true religion, must depend.

Am I serious? Alas, I am. Toynbee's truly monstrous self-adulation, combined with his fundamental obscurantism, do indeed emotionally repel me. But let us not give out all the heat we may feel. Perhaps the subject is best treated with detachment, even if it requires an artificial detachment. So let us interpose the cooling concept of an imaginary century. Let us transport ourselves, in imagination, a century or so onward in time, so that we can look back calmly upon the phenomenon before us. Let us suppose that all has worked according to plan. The Time of Troubles is over. Western Civilsation, long declining, has now at last (thank God) foundered, and all that is good in it, and in other civilisations, has been preserved and pickled in the universal world-state with its universal world-religion of Mish-Mash. From this vantage post I invite my readers to look coolly back at the figure of Toynbee as it will then emerge from his own New Testament and from the glosses with which his disciples, in the course of a century, will naturally have enriched it.

It is noon. The drowsy doggerel of the

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Founder's Litany "Mother Mary, Mother Isis, Mother Cybele, Mother Ishtar, Mother Kwanyin, have compassion on us . . ." is rhythmically sounding in all the Churches of Mish-Mash. We know the history of this Litany of course: how the Disciples asked the Master to teach them to pray, and how in "London, at 6.25 p.m. on 15th June 1951, after looking once more, this afternoon, at Fra Angelico's picture of the Beatific Vision," the Master obliged by uttering this formula (Vol. X, p. 143). As the unintelligible sounds issue mechanically from his lips, the worshipper will, of course, allow his eyes to stray. Perhaps they will light on a stained-glass window, illuminated from without by the rational daylight. What will it represent? That, of course, will vary with the locality. At Abersoch, in Wales, for instance, a richly painted window will naturally illustrate the great local miracle of the Epiphany: how the Founder, at the age of two, already driven forward by intellectual curiosity and a philosophy of action, "took and carried out a decision to run into the sea in order to find out what would happen," and was haled back by an anxious nurse who, though she sprained her ankle in the act, has since been amply compensated by her official beatification. The church at Abersoch is now rich, thanks to the resort of pilgrims eager to baptise their children in those now curative seawaves, so the window is a fine one, and the artist has not failed to point the moral of the incident. How could he, when the Master has himself so clearly emphasised it: "There was no benevolently officious nurse to pull him back from the intellectual plunge that he made, six years later, into the Ocean of History" (X. 19).

"Six years later," the inattentive worshipper may well muse, "that means that our Founder took his first decisive intellectual plunge at the age of eight. When? Where? In what parish church or rural shrine is this great event worthily commemorated?" On this point, unfortunately, the Scriptures are ambiguous. For the Founder himself tells us (X. 218) that he was only seven when he read, in the Book of Genesis, about Noah's three sons and thence precociously took note of "the differentiation of the Human Race into divers groups and sub-groups and the historical problems raised by the question how these groups are related to one another"; and again (X. 235) that he was not yet eight when he read *Paradise Lost* in three days and imbibed from it "the idea of a theodicy"; and it was at the age of seven, too, he tells us, that he received from his mother the inscribed copy of her *True Stories from Scottish History* "which stands behind his shoulder in his study at No. 45 Pembroke Square, London," and which he has "just now" taken down (X. 18). . . .

How thoughtful, incidentally, of the Founder always to identify the placing of his books! These helpful details have made it possible to reconstitute his study exactly as he kept it, even down to that translation by Gilbert Murray which he took out of the row on May 11th, 1951 (X. 217); and Aunt Gertrude Toynbee's copy of Mommsen which he received from her in September 1906, which he read in the summer of "A.D. 1907" (now A.T. 18) and which was "here on my desk in May 1951" (X. 229); and the four volumes of *The Story of the Nations*, with the bookplate of grandmother (now the Blessed) Harriet Toynbee in them, which were "all four of them on my table on this 21st day of February 1951" (X. 219); and the map of Greece which he used on April 26th, 1912, and is still "lying at his elbow at this moment" on September 23rd, 1952; and the forty-two sheets of an early MS. by himself which, "as he wrote these words, he took out of a drawer in a bookcase given him by his mother in his study at 45 Pembroke Square, Kensington, London" (X. 22). The study, of course, is now no longer in Pembroke Square. Like the Virgin's House at Bethlehem, which miraculously migrated to Loreto in Italy, it has now been removed intact to the great Toynbeeum in California, and a mere replica has replaced it in Kensington. But London is not entirely without original relics. The three volumes of Grote's work on Plato, for instance, which the Founder "took down from the shelf in the Athenæum Club" are

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now preserved in the club in a jewelled reliquary and exposed for the worship of members on the anniversary of the day, April 23rd, 1951 (formerly St. George's Day), on which the Founder records that he touched them (X. 20).

MEANWHILE, in other churches throughout the world, similar thoughts must be occurring to other worshippers. At Dunwich, Suffolk, a statue of Mother and Child naturally commemorates the Founder's Mother giving him, when he was five years old, that sagacious tip ("the Wisdom of Dunwich") which enabled him, five years later, to write a better essay than the other boys in his school (X. 41). At the school itself, Wootton Court near Canterbury (now a training college for the Mish-Mash clergy), a splendid church is of course dedicated to the Confounding of the Elders in the matter of the Parthian Cataphracts (X. 224). Further afield, in Osaka, Japan, a rich temple marks the spot where the Founder, in November 1929, was inspired by a puppet-show to entertain profound thoughts about determinism and free-will (X. 231). In Greece, in the wild country between Káto Vezáni and Ythion, a rural shrine marks the spot where, on April 26th, 1912, the Founder drank dysentery from an infected stream and thus escaped the dangers of military service. (The lucky stream now cures the disease it then inflicted.) At 12 Westbourne Terrace, London, a fine wall-painting depicts the Founder there listening to his great-uncle Captain (now St.) Henry Toynbee discoursing on the rig of sailing ships (X. 213); and at Arezzo the old daubs by Piero della Francesca have been painted over with more truly devotional frescos representing the Founder fruitfully questioning the rector of the church on "the affinities of certain forms of headgear" (X. 239). The spot where the Founder swam the Euphrates (IX. 38) is of course a great place of pilgrimage, pickpockets, and baksheesh. In Yorkshire, the less ambitious tourist will find, on Slingsby Moor, the barrow where the Messiah was able to catch "still unspent reverberations of waves of psychic events" since unrecorded time; and, at Ampleforth Abbey, a noble altar-piece commemorating the Founder's famous Dream in "A.D. 1936" (A.T. 47) of clinging to the Crucifix: the premonition of his later Passion (IX. 634).

Of these lesser shrines there is no end. For the Founder not only excelled St. Paul and St. Francis Xavier in his travels, he was also considerate enough to supply the faithful with a very detailed record of them. The mere list of places visited by him fills, in his index, three and a half column-inches. But some reference must be made to the seven great centres of the new religion, the Seven Stations as they are now called, where the Founder had his seven direct historical revelations—such an improvement on "the sole flash of inspiration with which Gibbon was ever visited" (X. 103)—when he was "rapt into a momentary communion" with incidents in the distant past. The first Station was at Oxford (now Arnoldopolis) in "A.D. 1911" (A.T. 22). Others were on a peak of Pharsalus on January 10th, 1912 (conducted tours on the anniversary); at Monemvasía on April 23rd, 1912, where "the quietly browsing goats" (X. 136) are now stylised figures in local art, like the ox and the ass of Bethlehem in Italian painting; and on a peninsula in the Gulf of Chihli on November 24th, 1929, where, in spite of this important event, the ungrateful natives are unhappily not yet settled in the new faith. But the great revelation is the seventh, which took place near Victoria (now "the Seventh") Station in London. On that occasion the Master "found himself in communion not just with this or that episode in History, but with all that had been, and was, and was to come. In that instant he was directly aware of the passage of History gently flowing through him in a mighty current and of his own life welling like a wave in the flow of this vast tide" (X. 139). How unfortunate that the Founder "failed to record the exact date" of this experience. In the absence of evidence the Church has had to name a conventional date for its annual commemoration: the Day of

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Toynbee's Transfiguration is now kept on December 25th (formerly Christmas).

OF COURSE the Founder's life was not without its frustrations. In his early days there was the Temptation in Buckinghamshire when the Devil, in the form of Uncle Paget Toynbee ("*vivebat* A.D. 1855–1932"—for the Founder always gives these useful biographical data about the Holy Family) and Aunt Helen Toynbee ("*née* Helen Wrigley, of Bury, Lancs.") sought to divert him at age of seventeen into "a wrong intellectual turning." "Your Aunt Nellie and I," said this plausible old uncle, "have come to the conclusion that you have been dispersing your interests too widely, and our advice to you is to make your choice of some single subject and to concentrate hereafter on that." Fortunately the young Messiah had an "instantaneous conviction that this advice was bad." He put Satan firmly behind him, and continued to pursue the superficial omniscience which he afterwards so triumphantly attained. Then there was the sad case of the Betrayal, when the Master was "wholesomely shocked" by the defection of his supposed disciple G. L. Iscariot Cheesman. Cheesman, we are told, so far yielded to "the dismal orthodox cult of specialisation" that he insisted on learning thoroughly the subject which he was employed to teach. Fortunately the Master survived all these dangers, and now his "narrow escape from intellectual perdition" (X. 35) is the theme of many a vivid fresco (and many a dull sermon) in the new age. During the years of his mission he was of course past the danger of temptation, although he was never free from carping critics whom, by one of his happy historical parallels, he would designate as "Scribes and Pharisees." This, however, was to be expected. Even in his schooldays he had premonitions of his future Agony, "though I had not yet tasted the cup for myself" (X. 235); nor had he yet—as he was afterwards, like St. Francis of Assisi, to do—received "Christ's stigmata" (IX. 644).

However, all that is now over. The words, the very names of the critics are now extinct, except in so far as the Master has deigned to take note of them. . . . And here, no doubt, our worshipper's mind will again digress to commend the providence of the Founder who salvaged so much of past literature (in so far as he approved of it) from the wholesome conflagration of the pre-Mish-Mash culture. Readers of Toynbee today sometimes object to his numerous and (to a superficial view) irrelevant quotations from ancient and modern literature. And why, they ask, all these careful references: may one not remark that human projects sometimes "gang agley" without appending a footnote reference to "Burns, Robert: to a Mouse, stanza 7"? May not one use the phrase "eyes that see not" without giving chapter and verse for the nine passages of the (Christian) Bible in which it occurs? A moment's thought should silence these impertinent questioners. Do they not realise that the Master is not writing for us but for our descendants in the Half-Baked Millennium of which he is the Prophet? By then all previous "pagan" literature will of course have been destroyed, so that only those passages which are, as it were, pickled in the new Bible can participate in its immortality; just as fragments of Hebrew secular literature survive embalmed in the Christian Scriptures. Naturally such detached gobbets from the lost literature of the past will need an explanatory apparatus which to us, who still know the originals, may well seem otiose. Instead of cavilling at the overcrowded pages, we should express our gratitude to Toynbee for allowing so much of pre-Toynbeean literature to enter, in these stormy times, into the Noah's Ark of his Holy Writ.

I HAVE said enough. The temptation of fantasy is irresistible when dealing with this huge, presumptuous, and utterly humourless work, and perhaps I have gone a little further than the orthodox Toynbeean priesthood may go. But the quotations I have given are really enough to prove my point. Has any other writer, however apocalyptic his message, taken such pains to acquaint the public with

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the trivial details of his own life, the successive signs of his Election, or to represent himself personally as the culminating end-product of one civilisation, the herald, law-giver, and prophet of another? Has any other Christian scholar thus applied to himself the successive incidents of the Christian myth? If the conclusions were stated without the evidence, they would be rejected as incredible. Such egotism leaves the claim of Mohammed, to be the unique prophet of God, nowhere. But then Mohammed, as Toynbee says, was "a conspicuously unsuccessful prophet." He only spread his message from China to Nigeria, from Indonesia to Spain. Toynbee, it is clear, is the Messiah of a much wider world.

But let us forget these details. It is not the content of Toynbee's work that interests me. To me it is a matter of indifference whether he read some unimportant book in the library of the Athenæum Club or in No. 45 Pembroke Square, in the summer of 1907 or in September 1952. I am interested in the character, not the content of his work; and I am interested in it because, fundamentally, I find it not merely erroneous—that is not a matter for emotion—but hateful. For Toynbee does not only utter false arguments and dogmatic statements, calling them "scientific" and "empirical"; he does not only preach a gospel of deliberate obscurantism; he seems to undermine our will, welcome our defeat, gloat over the extinction of our civilisation, not because he supports the form of civilisation which threatens us, but because he is animated by what we can only call a masochistic desire to be conquered. If Hitler and Stalin rejoiced in the prospect of destroying the West, theirs at least was a crude, intelligible rejoicing. They smacked their lips because they looked for plunder. Toynbee has no such clear interest in supporting a conqueror. He hungers spiritually not for this or that conquest, but for our defeat.

Defeat by whom? Toynbee does not care. To him it does not matter whether it is Hitler's New Order or World Communism which provides the irrelevant secular structure for the religion of Mish-Mash. And so there have been various claimants. For instance, in 1947–51, the American ex-Marxist James Burnham, having swallowed Toynbee's Old Testament whole, declared that "Western civilisation has reached the stage in its development that calls for the creation of its Universal Empire" and urged the American government to seize its chance by rising and destroying the Russian government, "if necessary by total war." This ambition was not very different from that of Hitler. Indeed, if we look closer at Mr. Burnham's policy, we find that it is very like that of Hitler: for he declared that the value of European allies was to be measured not by their attachment to any liberal values, but solely by their hatred of communism. Consequently he rejected all other national leaders except General Franco, General Chiang-kai-Shek, General de Gaulle, and the Pope. If this is the measure of virtue, it seems a pity that Hitler had not been left in peace. He was, after all, incontestably anti-communist; and he might have been necessary to reinforce Mr. Burnham's seedy army of crusaders. As it is, it seems unlikely that these three generals and the Pope would make much of a showing against the Red Army, and therefore it is a Russian conquest of Europe that Toynbee must envisage. He envisages it without apparent dismay. The essential thing to him is that a world empire should be established. The secular details are irrelevant. Christianity needed the secular framework of the Roman Empire: what did it matter whether the emperor was Augustus or Nero, Elagabalus or Diocletian? Perhaps in the end, after three centuries, there will even be a Constantine.

Thus Toynbee is still the philosophic ally of any conqueror who will destroy the West. And this, I think, is the explanation of a paradox which certain critics have noted in his work. For although Toynbee always presents himself as a "gentle" figure, a "pilgrim" humbly seeking universal understanding, in fact his history is primarily concerned with dynasties and conquests. He is uninterested in the arts and sciences, in trade and industry, in administration and finance. His mind prefers to dwell among the horrors of war, the march of armies, the seizure of empires, the

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founding of tyrant houses. "Such preoccupation with violence," says one critic, "might seem puzzling in so pronounced a pacifist and humanitarian if Freud had not taught us the meaning of ambivalence." In fact, I fear, the explanation is simple. Like many intellectuals, Toynbee seems fascinated by brute power and longs to surrender to it. And since he identifies himself with the History of the world which he has felt "gently flowing through him like a mighty current," he wants the whole world to surrender to it too.

SUCH, I believe, is Toynbee's philosophy. It is a doctrine of messianic defeatism. Toynbee detests Western civilisation because it is basically liberal and rational. Detesting it, he wishes to see it destroyed, and he does not care who destroys it. On its ruins he envisages a new society, or rather, the religion only of a new society. The new society itself, as far as he is concerned, can be the nightmare society of 1984, provided that the religion is the religion of Mish-Mash, of which he is the prophet and Messiah. And this he calls a great hope for the West! Is it any wonder that the greatest of his critics has called it "a blasphemy against the West."

For in fact there is no reason to fold our hands and resign ourselves to the inevitable death of Western civilisation. There is, of course, a relative decline in the power of Western Europe: a decline due to the technical achievements of Western Europe in mobilising the resources of the much greater areas which now overshadow it. It is not now conceivable that Western Europe—that is, Britain, France, the Low Countries, and Italy —should dominate the world to the extent that they have done in the past. But who regards "domination" as an essential mark of civilisation? And anyway this real decline is relative not absolute: it is quite improper to ascribe a "disease" to a man who, while as healthy as ever, has been outgrown by a giant. Moreover, if we compare Western Europe today with Western Europe in the 1930's, we find that in some respects it is positively healthier today. In the 1930's Germany and Italy were lost to the West. Today all Italy and half Germany are firmly recovered. In the 1930's the social situation throughout Western Europe was rendered precarious by "the contradictions of capitalism" which both Hitler and Stalin sought to exploit. Today those contradictions have been so largely resolved that no Western country seriously fears revolution. Indeed, the boot is on the other leg. It is in the communist countries of Eastern Europe that the contradictions of communism are now threatening revolution, and the intellectuals of Poland, Hungary, and Russia itself look to Western "social capitalism" as the answer. In such circumstances to talk of the West as if it were not merely reduced in relative power but a diseased civilisation is not only incorrect: it is absurd.

Those who look to history for lessons should look to both sides of it. They will then find that the West has "declined" before now. For instance, in the early 16th century, Christendom saw itself reduced to frontiers almost as narrow as any it had known since the fall of the Western Roman Empire. The once Christian cities of Asia and North Africa had long been lost; now the Turks had advanced into the heart of Europe. The long Christian islands of the Mediterranean, the Christian cities of Belgrade and Budapest were all lost. When, men asked, would the remorseless conquest be stayed? Europe only survived, they said, thanks to the Sophy of Persia, who distracted the Turks in Asia. And then, on top of these disasters, came the great schism of the Protestant Reformation. What wonder that the Toynbee of those days, Pope Clement VII, believed that the Last Days predetermined in the Apocalypse were about to come and, in this mood, commissioned Michael Angelo to paint, on the wall of the Sistine Chapel, the Last Judgment? And yet, looking back, it is not this aspect of the 16th century which seems to us significant. The 16th century, to us, is the beginning of the greatness of the West. Even to Toynbee, who regards the greatness of the West as its decay, the 16th century is the beginning, not the end, of the process.

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A similar point could be made about the early 17th century. Then, too, certain sad spirits supposed that the world was coming to an end. Nature, they said, was in decay, and while enthusiasts looked eagerly for the Millennium, defeatist spirits, repeating, like Sir Thomas Browne, that " 'tis too late to be ambitious, the great mutations of the world are over," resigned themselves to the impending doom. And yet this was the age of Bacon and Descartes, the beginning of those scientific discoveries which had enriched and alleviated the life of man!

Therefore, let us hear no more of the Decline of the West. Speaking absolutely, not relatively, the phrase has no meaning. The Toynbeean tables are about as relevant to modern historical knowledge as the chronology of Archbishop Ussher. And as for the Messiah and the Millennium, if we think of them at all, let it be only as a bogey. If the politics of 1984 and the religion of the Mish-Mash are all that our new prophet can offer us as the reward of acquiescence in the "inevitable" ruin which he "scientifically" predicts, that at least should spur us to throw this Jonah overboard and resist. After all, as some sage philosopher once observed, the irresistible is very often merely that which has not been resisted.

Poem

i am a little church(no great cathedral)
far from the splendor and squalor of hurrying cities
i do not worry if briefer days grow briefest
i am not sorry when sun and rain make april

my life is the life of the reaper and the sower;
my prayers are prayers of earth's own clumsily striving
(finding and losing and laughing and crying)children
whose any sadness or joy is my grief or my gladness

around me surges a miracle of unceasing
birth and glory and death and resurrection:
over my sleeping self float flaming symbols
of hope,and i wake to a perfect patience of mountains

i am a little church(far from the frantic
world with its rapture and anguish)at peace with nature
—i do not worry if longer nights grow longest
i am not sorry when silence becomes singing

winter by spring i lift my diminutive spire to
merciful Him Whose only now is forever:
standing erect in the deathless truth of His presence
(welcoming humbly His light and proudly His darkness)

E. E. Cummings

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Marcus Cunliffe: GEORGE WASHINGTON

IT MAY seem odd to include George Washington in a series called "Men and Ideas." He was an able, upright, and sensible man, but he was bookish neither by training nor by temperament. He had little formal education, and the thirty-seven volumes of his collected writings may be searched in vain for evidence of profundity, though they contain any amount of gumption. To such American contemporaries as Jefferson, Madison, and John Adams the word "speculation" probably meant primarily a process of thought: to Washington it probably first suggested investment in Western lands. A recent Washington anthology has a section of "Maxims, Mottos, Brief Opinions." Under *Philosophy* we find: "The principles of Philosophy Moral, Natural, etc., I should think very desirable knowledge for a gentleman." Or on *Potatoes*: "Of all the improving and ameliorating crops, none in my opinion are equal to potatoes on stiff and hard-bound land." These are fairly typical entries. There is nothing silly about them, but they are hardly *pensées*.

Washington, that is, held "views" rather than "ideas": the decent, moderate views of a Virginia gentleman whose most absorbing interest (if he had been left to his own devices) would have been agriculture. When he was decorating the parlour of his Mount Vernon home in 1759, he wrote to London for busts of Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar, Charles XII of Sweden, and Frederick II of Prussia. He was told that none was available at a reasonable price, but that there were plenty of busts of poets and philosophers at fifteen shillings each. He did not order these.

Indeed, few of his admirers have ever sought to prove that Washington was an intellectual. There is a pamphlet, by a James Penniman, which seems to argue that because Washington wrote a great many letters he was therefore a man of letters. Penniman works hard to establish Washington as a scholar-reader ("In 1784 he made a complete summary of Higgins on Calcareous Cements. . . ."). But he gives up in the end, content to claim that "England's greatest contribution to the civilisation of the world is the works of Shakespeare; America's is the character of Washington."

There is no need to labour the point. Washington is not important as a thinker but as a phenomenon. He was the object of thought in others. The idea *of* Washington is the interesting thing; he is Marmoreal Man, the omnipresent Hero, less urgent and menacing than the Lenins and Titos and Mao Tse-tungs who stare down from modern hoardings, yet perhaps one of their innocent progenitors.

AS WITH these latter-day Heroes, Washington began to disappear as a credible human being while he was still alive. Babies were being christened after him as early as 1775; the new federal capital was named in his honour; he was exhibited in waxwork effigy in the 1790's. *Vae, puto deus fio*, the dying emperor Vespasian is supposed to have said: Alas, I think I am about to become a god. Such a mixture of levity and magnificence would have been foreign to Washington. But he might with justice have thought the same thing as he lay on his death-bed at Mount Vernon in 1799. "God-like" Washington, dead, passed into legend, his surname appropriated for 1 American state, 7 mountains, 8 streams, 10 lakes, 33 counties; for 9 American colleges; for 121 American towns and villages. His visage is on coins and banknotes and postage stamps; his portrait (usually the pebble-mouthed, immensely grave likeness by Gilbert Stuart) is hung in countless corridors and offices. His head—60 ft. from chin to scalp—has been carved

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out of a mountainside in South Dakota. There are statues of him all over the United States—and all over the world: you can find them in London and in Paris, in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro, in Caracas and Budapest and Tokyo. The Washington Monument in Washington D.C. is 555 ft. high: higher (we are told) than the spires of Cologne Cathedral, higher than the Pyramids, higher than St. Peter's, much higher than St. Paul's. There are books about him by the score, speeches by the hundred, nearly all of them sonorous and reverential. Most of them are impossible to read, and can only be evaluated statistically, in round numbers or in man-hours. Set-pieces in adulation, they repeat themselves and one another.

It is hard to know what to say in face of this process of civic elephantiasis. Not only has the man himself been well-nigh obliterated: what he might be thought to stand for is almost lost. We seek some sour antidote to so much saccharine, and tend to agree with Emerson: "Every hero becomes a bore at last. . . . They cry up the virtues of George Washington—'Damn George Washington!' is the poor Jacobin's whole speech and confutation." Yet, fighting back stupefaction, we may identify four rôles that Washington has been made to play. The four are not sharply distinct—nothing is, in this misty Valhalla—but at any rate they are something to hang on to. So, there is

(a) *the Copybook Hero*,
(b) *the Father of His People* (I follow what might be called hallowed custom in capitalising the pronoun),
(c) *the Disinterested Patriot*, and
(d) *the Revolutionary Leader*.

These are all guises of the hero-figure. In each, Washington is a member of a pantheon; and for each pantheon there is a kind of anti-pantheon of heroes who fell from grace.

The Copybook Hero

WASHINGTON as he has descended to us is largely a creation of the 19th century English-speaking world, with its bustling, didactic, evangelical emphasis. This is the world of tracts and primers, of Chambers's *Miscellanies* and Samuel Smiles, of mechanics' institutes and lyceum lectures. Bazaars and bridges are opened, foundation-stones laid, prizes and certificates distributed, drunkards admonished and rescued, slaves emancipated. It is, in the convenient term of David Riesman, the age of the "inner-directed" personality whose essential attributes are summed up in the titles of Smiles's works—*Self-Help, Thrift, Duty, Character*—or in a short poem of Emerson's that is also called *Character*:

> *The sun set, but set not his hope:*
> *Stars rose; his faith was earlier up:*
> *Fixed on the enormous galaxy,*
> *Deeper and older seemed his eye;*
> *And matched his sufferance sublime*
> *The taciturnity of time. . . .*

Character is the key-word in the copybook version of George Washington, as we have already seen with Mr. Penniman. Lord Brougham is of the same opinion: "The test of the progress of mankind will be their appreciation of the character of Washington."

The enterprising Parson Weems, a Victorian before his time, was the first to fit Washington into what was to become the pattern of the century. His aim in writing a pamphlet-biography of Washington was, Weems explained to a publisher in 1800, to bring out "his Great Virtues. (1) His Veneration for the Diety [*sic*], or Religious Principles. (2) His Patriotism. (3) His Magninimity [*sic*]. (4) His Industry. (5) His Temperance and Sobriety. (6) His Justice, &c &c." Here is the copybook canon. Weems had no more hesitation in distorting the actual Washington to make him fit than had Jared Sparks in "editing" Washington's correspondence so as to present a more dignified picture. Weems's pamphlet grew into a book, with all the famous false anecdotes: Washington chopping down the cherry-tree (*"I can't tell a lie, Pa; you know I can't tell a lie. I did cut it with my hatchet."—Run to my arms, you dearest boy, cried his father in transports*); Washington upbraiding his schoolmates for fighting (*"You shall never, boys, have my consent to a practice so shocking! shocking even in slaves and dogs; then how utterly scandalous in little boys at school, who ought to look on one another as brothers"*); Washington praying on his knees alone at Valley Forge (in fact, Washington was very far from being a religious fanatic). All through the book, as unremittingly as Horatio Alger was to thump home the mes-

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sage, Weems showed how "duty and advantage" went together. Thus, kindness to his elder brother brought George the Mount Vernon estate, when his brother died childless; and exemplary conduct won him the hand of the widow Custis, whose "*wealth* was equal, at least, to one hundred thousand dollars!" The homily was irresistible; by 1825 Weems's biography had gone through forty editions, and forty more were to appear in due course. The cherry-tree tale became a special favourite in copybook lore. In the secular hagiology of the period—the equivalent of St. Lawrence with his gridiron, or St. Catherine with her wheel—Washington and the tree joined Newton and William Tell with their respective apples, Watt with his kettle, Bruce with his spider, Columbus with his egg, Philip Sidney with his water-bottle. But Washington's whole career was pressed into service, not merely one episode. He was the man without faults, and with all the 19th century virtues, from courage to punctuality, from modesty to thrift—and all within human compass, and all crowned by success.

Father of His People

For obvious reasons, American admiration of Washington took on heightened forms. In the well-worn phrase of Henry Lee, he was *first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen*—first chronologically as well as emotionally: America's first commander-in-chief, and first president. He was the prime native hero, a necessary creation for a new country. It was only natural to replace "George Guelf" (Jefferson's description) by George Washington; indeed the substitution was made actual in New York, where the base of a destroyed statue of George III was used to display one of Washington. For America he was originator and vindicator, both patron saint *and* defender of the faith, in a curiously timeless fashion as if he were Charlemagne, St. Joan, and Bonaparte telescoped into one person. After him, only Lincoln has rivalled his glory. In some respects Lincoln is now a more relevant hero than Washington: his Second Inaugural is the new testament among national documents to the old testament of Washington's Farewell Address. Yet Lincoln is still human, time-bound and even time-stained. One cannot quite imagine him in a painting like Brumidi's "Apotheosis of Washington," which is on the dome of the National Capitol and shows Washington flanked by Freedom and Victory. Nor can one imagine American critics objecting to a fictional account of Lincoln (or for that matter any other American heroes, with the possible exception of Robert E. Lee) as they objected to Thackeray's treatment of Washington in *The Virginians*: "Why, this is the very essence of falsehood. Washington was not like other men; and to bring his lofty character down to the level of the vulgar passions of common life, is to give the lie to the grandest chapter in the uninspired annals of the human race." To admit failings in Washington was to attack the holy fabric of America. In this respect J. P. Morgan too acted as a defender of the faith when (in the 1920's) he burned some letters by Washington that had come into his possession, on the grounds that they were "smutty." Hence, too, the universal American horror at men like Benedict Arnold, the betrayers of Washington and of their fatherland.

Some of his countrymen—notably John Adams—were a little irked by the Washington cult. They felt that adulation had gone too far—as in the suggestion that God had denied Washington children of his own so that he could assume paternity for the whole nation. But even Adams was prepared to defend Washington as a native product against all challengers from other lands, with the proviso that Washington's virtues were America's virtues, rather than vice versa. Washington was great because his country bred such qualities, and shaped their fulfilment. Here then are two conceptions of Washington, as transcendent American and as representative American. In either case, he was "identified with the country" to an unparalleled degree (as Rufus Griswold wrote). "He was its mind; it was his image and illustration. If we would classify and measure him, it must be with nations, and not with individuals."

The Disinterested Patriot

As father of His People, Washington of course stands apart—though perhaps conceding a lesser share to Benjamin Franklin ("The history of our Revolution," said John Adams, "will be one continued lie from one end to the other. The essence of the

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whole will be that Dr. Franklin's electrical rod smote the earth and out sprang General Washington. That Franklin electrified him with his rod, and thence forward these two conducted all the policy, negotiations, legislatures, and war"). As Disinterested Patriot he is one of a select pantheon. Against nearly all historical precedent, he retired to private life twice, after holding the two most powerful offices in the land. Marvelling at such humility, men could only compare him with Timoleon of Corinth, with Cincinnatus, with the younger Cato of Addison's play (two of whose lines—" 'tis not in mortals to command success," and "the post of honour is a private station"—he was fond of quoting). And they could contrast him with the larger anti-pantheon of interested patriots, figures like Sulla and Cæsar, Wallenstein, Cromwell, or his own contemporary, Napoleon. On the whole it is a classical assembly—these are Marmoreal Men—and Washington's place in it contributes still further to the strange, timeless, dreamlike unreality of our vision of him. His rôle here fits well into the Classical Revival mood of early 19th century America. (It does, though, conflict a little with the cosier, more domesticated Weems-ian view. We should remember that Horatio Greenough's colossal marble statue of Washington in a toga was ridiculed in the 1840's. A tourist who went to look at Greenough's work found that "some irreverent heathen had taken the pains to climb up and insert a large 'plantation' cigar between the lips of the *pater patriae* . . . I could not help thinking . . . that if Washington had looked less like the Olympic Jove, and more like himself, not even the vagabond who perpetrated the trick of the cigar would have dared or dreamed of such a desecration").

The Revolutionary Leader

THIS is an idea of Washington held mainly outside the United States, one with a strong tincture of ideology. It is of Washington as the strong man, the champion of nationalism, the victor in the first great revolution of modern times. Here he is chairman of a vehement, faintly swashbuckling committee whose other members include Lafayette, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Bolívar, and Garibaldi, with vacant places left by Itúrbide and others who disgraced themselves. Seen in the right way, he shares —indeed predicts—their experiences, though for him the conclusion is far sweeter. At the head of his "banditti" (as the English often called his forces) he is hunted, thwarted, lonely, outnumbered, maintains midwinter vigils. But the Cause (and the reading of Tom Paine) sustains him; he crosses the Delaware . . . and triumph is eventually his. It is all an intoxicating brew of republicanism, conspiracy, freemasonry, new banners (in one of the Washington myths he collaborates with Betsy Ross in devising the American flag) and new anthems, new fashions in dress and so on. Lafayette sends Washington "the main key of the fortress of despotism" (i.e. of the Bastille; the key still reposes at Mount Vernon). "It is," Lafayette writes, "a tribute which I owe as a son to my adopted father, as an aide-de-camp to my general, as *a missionary of liberty to its patriarch*" (my italics). Bolívar carries a portrait-medallion of Washington. Latin-American statesmen of the 19th century often allude to Washington in their speeches; and possibly we may discern the dim outlines of a fifth rôle for Washington, one that he *might* have played—as presiding genius for the never-found Atlantis known as Pan-America. . . .

It is too late for that now; and the idea of Washington has faded for us in other ways. We are aware of ourselves, in the 20th century, looking at 19th century versions of an 18th century man. We are less disposed to play at pantheons like that of the Pennsylvania German's *Washingtons Ankünft in Elisium*, which pictured Washington in earnest conversation with Brutus and Columbus. We are distinctly suspicious of revolutionary leaders; and in any case we note how poorly Washington fitted this particular part. Thanking Lafayette politely for the Bastille souvenir, he responded with a gift of his own: "Not for the value of the thing, my dear Marquis, but as a memorial, and because they are the manufacture of this city, I send you herewith a pair of shoe-buckles." What inspired flatness!

This is the clue we think we see to Washington nowadays. As an inspiration he has gone rather flat. It is not that he has been exposed as a fraud. The debunking historians of the 1920's claimed that Washington was a prig and a bad general. Subsequent and more serious historians have shown that he was not

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quite impeccable, especially as a young man. But their disclosures are all harmless: it is Weems and Sparks that they expose, not Washington. He is still, deservedly, regarded as America's primary hero, and no doubt always will be. We may think that Weems's mistake was to conceive of Washington as "inner-directed" where in truth he had many qualities of the "tradition-directed" 18th century. But that does not matter very much. As far as the *idea* of Washington is concerned, Americans now find assurance rather than inspiration. They have had him long enough to take him for granted, or almost to forget him altogether. For the last thirty years the admiration accorded him has been somewhat perfunctory. Or—as in the case of the 1932 bicentennial celebrations, as organised by the remarkable Sol Bloom—it has been frenetic. He is corny, as Jefferson or Lincoln are certainly not. The better authors are not moved by him, and—so far as I know—children are no longer named after him (that habit persisted longest among American Negroes, it would appear. For the little ex-slave boy Booker Taliaferro to adopt the surname of Washington was in a way to take on American citizenship).

But such flatness is comforting in the 1950's. Older panegyrists made the point, though they tended to cover it over with rhetoric and patriotic pride, when they stressed the Americanness of Washington—his blessed ordinariness in a land of ordinary people. Despite a certain grudging perfectionism, John Adams was right when he told a correspondent in 1785, after Washington had gone back to private life:

> *Instead of adoring a Washington, mankind should applaud the nation which educated him. . . . I glory in the character of a Washington, because I know him to be only an exemplification of the American character. . . . In the days of Pompey, Washington would have been a Cæsar; his officers and partisans would have stimulated him to it; he could not have had their confidence without it; in the times of Charles, a Cromwell; in the days of Philip the second, a prince of Orange, and would have wished to be Count of Holland. But in America he could have no other ambition than that of retiring. In wiser and more virtuous times he would not have had that, for that is an ambition. He would still be content to be Governor of Virginia, President of Congress, a member of a Senate, or a House of Representatives. . . .*

He was right, that is, in removing Washington from the timeless pantheon of demigods and relating him to his own age and background. This is the trend, expressed with a good deal of confidence and sophistication, of present-day American commentaries. Adams was never able to suppress his disdain for Washington's mental equipment ("That Washington was not a scholar is certain. That he was too illiterate, unlearned, unread for his station and reputation is equally past dispute"). Modern American commentators have fewer difficulties in coming to grips with the facts of American popular culture—a culture in which the scholar and the public man are usually poles apart. Thus Louis Hartz in his interesting new book, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, argues that we do not think "in terms of Washington's self-abnegation with respect to monarchy and dictatorship or in terms of a lucky Providence which saved America from aristocracy. Madison explained the first issue when he said that the country would not stand for autocratic rule, and John Dickinson explained the second when he said that you could not manufacture an aristocracy overnight."

THIS is to cut Washington down to life-size. There may be a danger, though, of proffering something that is not much more than a cut-out—a 20th century one in place of the tired 19th century one. Washington's world was very different from what Edward Shils has called the "populistic" present-day America, with its blatantly tender regard for the general will. As a corrective to the latest correct view there is still something to be said for the familiar, distorted, outmoded notion of Washington as a stiff and strong-willed man, capable on occasion of going against popular opinion. In the old myth he at least prayed in private, and his bowel movements were his own affair.

If we can only keep in mind all the various views of Washington, from antique to contemporary-modern, he can still serve for some generalisations about the nature of the hero-leader in America. Whether or not the pattern could have been different (if, say, his personality had been otherwise, or if some other man had been the first president),

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Washington helped to set it: to establish the nature of the president as somewhere between monarch, prime minister, and common denominator, both transcendent and typical, both timeless Delphic oracle and target for ferocious abuse (we find a poet like Philip Freneau treating Washington in both ways). It is a strange, accidental, vulgar-lofty conception, at the heart of the American mystery. It calls for a degree of solemnity (which Mr. Adlai Stevenson is accused of not possessing), and it invites scurrility. During his administration (Washington was no exception) the American president is expected to reveal miraculous qualities (the ritual of choosing him recalls the Tibetan search for a Dalai Lama—some divine child with the precise holy markings). Yet he is left peculiarly vulnerable. Everything is expected of him and nothing is given to him: no titles, houses, decorations. John Adams's petulant remarks on Washington are significant here. It is vain of Washington, he maintains, to have served without pay, and vain to retire from the service of the state; the proper course would have been to carry on like some celestial work-horse. The rewards of such virtue are honorific and largely posthumous.

We are accustomed to think of the American outlook as pragmatic and down-to-earth. So it is, in part; but in comparison with the dense, shrewd, worldly British texture it seems surprisingly thin, diffuse, and heroic. It has no solid chronology; past and future merge, abstractedly, without continuance. The State in America is weak in many ways; devotion to it is not a common American habit; yet—with its presidents at any rate—the State tends to swallow its servants. All this is no doubt less true of some of his successors than of Washington; but how striking it is in his own life. He labours over the years to construct the Mount Vernon that the tourists recognise today. But he works on worn-out soil, the imported shrubs die, America moves away to the west. He has no direct heirs, and if he had, Mount Vernon would have impoverished them. It could only become a ruin or a shrine. There is little permanence for persons or places, only for texts and metaphors. And here we are back with the cherry-tree, Cincinnatus at the plough, the impossible chunks of ice in the Delaware, the imaginary Indian chief at the Monongahela who declared that no mortal bullet could kill George Washington.

Lot's Son

Four in his arms we sleep, Lot lies awake
All night, he does not let me lie awake
Or cut my own meat. All night
Through my ribs I feel his body's heat.
He will not let me drink from a bright cup
(Unless he wash it), or climb high up.
His game: he points his finger at my eye
Saying, "You are crying," until I cry,
To make me a man. Rope he holds me taut,
He knots, undoes the knots, I am caught
Round myself. A knot ties mother to son
Not father to daughter; all rope, but Lot,
Lot who tied us together is undone.

Stanley Moss

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The World's Cities: Calcutta

Sudhin Datta

I

AMONG my more fabulous friends is an infuriating philosopher who used to claim that the only way of knowing a place was never to visit it. He is the most single-minded person I have yet encountered; and his paradoxes are the natural product of a speculative intellect that would compose the differences of the real and the negative in related multiplicity. Or such is my guess after looking at the titles of the formidable books he has published since he deserted his native Bengal to return to Oxford; and though that is as far as I have gone in understanding his basic ideas, I now admit the converse of his proposition. For I belong to a family which had lived where Fort William was built after the Battle of Plassey; and removed thence to the centre of the town, it has remained rooted to Calcutta ever since. But I who was born here at the turn of the century, and have spent most of my years in the city, cannot define its character; and when a newcomer asks me what he should see, I am struck dumb.

I see no connection between such failure on my part and the fact that Calcutta is an upstart hardly two centuries old, whereas the rest of India measures antiquity by millennia. At any rate, cities in other parts of the world can be young and attractive at the same time; and even in this immemorial land the populous sections of every town are seldom more ancient than the first capital of the British Raj. Besides, if Calcutta lacks archæological sites, it can boast of lanes as dingy and buildings as mouldy as those of Muttra, Delhi, and Benares, to mention only three out of perhaps a hundred names; and the east has the advantage over the north in possessing a truly disintegrating climate that generates ruins in record time. This the Bengalis seemed to have realised early in their history; and so until, say, two hundred years ago most of them not only lived in mud houses with thatched roofs, but likewise worshipped clay images which, once their day was done, went back to rest in the beds of superabundant rivers and ubiquitous marshes.

But until the 18th century the sacred

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Ganges considered the Hooghly her principal outlet into the sea; and consequently, on both banks of the latter, urban communities pullulated right down to seven or eight miles north of what is now Calcutta. Beyond stretched mangrove swamps dotted with obscure villages; and because the English who had already obtained a foothold farther upstream found themselves in constant difficulty with either the ruling power or their European rivals, they moved down to three of the larger fishing settlements. Thus in the 17th century was born the second city of the British Empire; and if its infancy passed amidst peril and pestilence, its nurses could find resignation in the thought that it was obviously under the influence of Siva's bloodthirsty consort whose shrine at adjacent Kalighat had been drawing pilgrims from at least the 15th century. It is conceivable that Calcutta does not owe its name to that destructive goddess; but I, for one, am convinced that she alone is responsible for its initial indifference to the past and subsequent avidity for the future.

II

In other words, however haphazard the preliminary choice, no site could be more appropriate for founding an exotic empire; and though Calcutta's indigenous residents were first attracted to it because it was a haven of security in a sea of anarchy, they stayed on for the sake of the new horizons they could glimpse from there. So long as they remained on foreign territory, they were free from traditional restraints; and the voluntary exile filled their pockets with easy money, as it stuffed their heads with strange ideas. In time the last became the most lasting of Britain's gifts to India; and for years Calcutta was their distributing centre. But, to start with, nobody felt rooted here: those who profited by the city's commerce bought estates elsewhere; and even after absentee landlords had ceased to be exceptions to the rule, they considered themselves less as members of a coherent community than as opportunists competing with others of their kind. The result did not conduce to the growth of economic classes; but it reduced the importance of caste by making family the hub of all activity.

Meanwhile the fashion of living in storeyed houses of brick and mortar had caught on; and even the would-be rich had to build mansions which their descendants could pretend to own so long as they could keep usurers at bay by promises or litigation. Thus arose the self-styled city of palaces; but it was altogether devoid of planning and civic conscience. Perhaps the pattern was set by the surrounding marshes with their solid protuberances; and stately homes soared over agglutinations of unspeakable hovels. Through them meandered lanes that changed from dunghill to cesspool during the monsoon; and though by the time I was a small boy they had been replaced by metalled roads in the better quarters, yet once, after a particularly heavy downpour, half the main streets remained under water for a whole week. Nor was any architectural sense discernible in individual buildings; and if the pillared residences of the Europeans were spaciously colonial, the public edifices were uniformly hideous. The Government House, the Museum, and perhaps the Victoria Memorial are exceptional; but the mock-Gothic High Court must be seen to be believed.

The corresponding achievement of the private sector is a Scottish castle constructed by a great patron of Indian culture; and since the most pungent of Calcutta's fish and vegetable markets has to be crossed to reach it, the juxtaposition is nightmarish enough to belong to the city of dreadful night. Other instances of bad taste were only a little less eccentric; and the rich Bengali could almost never conceive of a house in which Ionic supports and cast-iron balustrades did not go together. Walled grounds cut some of the palaces off from outside squalor; and within were lawns and flower-beds and ornamental waters, greek-style vases and rococo fountains and nudes of imitation marble, all focused around sprawling structures containing several courtyards, many halls overflowing with chandelier, console furniture, and mirror; and countless small rooms where men and

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women led their separate lives, only to come together at night to produce yet more life. Among the less wealthy the garden was reduced to potted palms, only two courtyards had to suffice, and while bedrooms were numerous, public rooms were few and fly-blown.

III

FACING the principal court stood a single-storeyed pavilion; and the number of its arches, as also of its inner compartments, was a fair index to its owner's pretensions. In it took place the religious festivals; and these were said to be at least thirteen in twelve months. The foremost among them occurred after the rains; and for four days a benign manifestation of Kali was worshipped under the name of Durga. On the tenth day of the full moon the ten-armed image was consigned to the river; and for the rest of the evening everybody had to embrace everybody else. The only other occasion when barriers were customarily lowered was Holi—a spring feast unashamedly erotic in content; and then not only did the streets turn into a riot of colour, but even homes suffered invasion from Bacchanalian crowds. At all other times people kept to their particular orbits; and respectable women were never admitted to them. There was, however, no dearth of nautch girls; and while they danced and sang in the great halls, the head of the house sat about with his friends and hangers-on, drinking champagne or sipping brandy.

Less intimate, if more ostentatious, parties were occasionally graced by the family's British patrons; but though on arrival they were obsequiously received, their segregation was soon contrived; and for an hour or two the condescending untouchables remained on exhibition, draining Gargantuan tumblers and nibbling Indian sweets. A wider circle was invited to the musical soirées, operatic performances, and readings from the epics and religious classics, which took place in the big courtyard; and for the frequent weddings of sons and daughters, nephews and nieces,

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every court and corridor and terrace had to be given over to banqueting, as no acquaintance could be excluded from the list of guests. But before the European stage could be adapted to Bengali conditions, Calcutta knew no public entertainment or, for the matter of that, public life. Bengalis did not frequent clubs; food taboos prevented the growth of restaurants; and drinking was a sin that could be indulged in apparent secrecy. So until organised sports, like racing, football, and cricket, in that order, began to draw crowds of fifteen to twenty thousand, Calcutta's only communal amusement was public meetings.

The Bengali's love of grandiloquence is coupled with vehemence in argument; and though the first public gatherings were convened to voice the well-recognised need for social and religious reform, the resultant debates emphasised, instead of mitigating, the factionalism inherent in the life of Calcutta. If, nevertheless, the native society did not soon reach maximum entropy, the reason was the increasing weight of the White Man's Burden. A handful of strangers in a teeming land, the city's rulers could not help suffering from some agoraphobia; but after they had managed to survive the Mutiny, their aloofness turned to arrogance of surprising blatancy. In that touch-and-go affair the Bengali had been wholeheartedly on their side; and he did not agree that insolence should be his reward at its conclusion. Even so he was prepared to make allowances for an alien's poorer nerves; and it was only when Ripon's proposal to let Indian magistrates try European criminals had almost unleashed a British mutiny that he grew too indignant to remember his differences with his countrymen.

IV

In their treatment of one another more snobbish than he was in his daily life, the foreigners presented to him a serried front more solid than the walls of his ancestral house. Whatever his station, he could not visit their homes except as a suppliant carrying propitiatory gifts; if business demanded his attendance at their clubs, he could only enter by the servants' door; he was not allowed to stray into the part reserved for them in the best public park; and to eat in their restaurants he had to borrow their clothes, or be thrown out. Macaulay had, of course, considered him indispensable to the administration; and to teach him a modicum of English his own system of education had been deliberately suppressed. But because his proficiency had exceeded his mentors' intention, he could be called a Baboo by even his near-illiterate superiors, provided they possessed a paler skin; and as a sedulous ape mouthing polysyllabic words whose meaning presumably eluded him, he was denied admission into the ranks of the Indian Army.

No wonder that before the last century was over, political agitation had become the vocation of most able Bengalis; and for this some credit must go to the Bengali law of inheritance which, by insisting that all assets of a deceased father be equally divided among his sons, prevents concentration of wealth for more than three generations. The old families were therefore declining fast; and a new prestige was beginning to attach to professional men who rose in the world without any obvious favour from the British. The majority of them were in legal practice, though numerically doctors came next; and quite a few edited newspapers which carried great influence. They realised that their success depended on their personal qualities and not on family connections; and inevitably they were loyal to their professions. Many of them had, moreover, learnt their trade abroad; and if, incidentally, they had returned with esoteric affectations that provoked the uninitiated to rude laughter, they received, at the same time, homage as national heroes because they claimed absolute equality with the European.

The savagery of Kipling's repetitive satire proves how furiously he and his community hated the Anglo-Bengalis; and there is no denying that at times they were quite insufferable. Even after years of eminence in their professions they spent their leisure recounting their juvenile pranks at Oxford or

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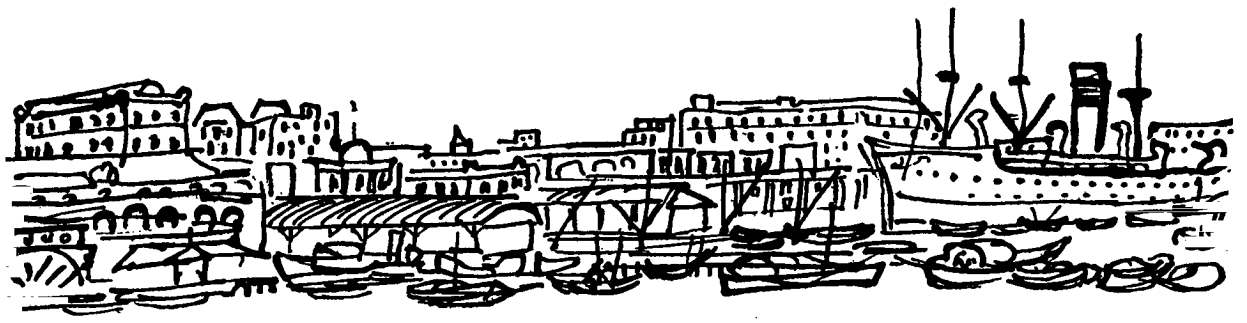
Cambridge, London or Edinburgh; and if they objected to being termed "wogs," their only exclusive club was open to oriental gentlemen who were too obviously Westernised. Yet when a British Chief Justice wanted to show his liberalism by asking to be a member of the institution, he was promptly told that he could join as soon as a leading Bengali barrister was admitted to the Bengal Club; and though, more British than the British in their immaculate frock-coats, the patriots worded their annual resolutions in mellifluous English, they demanded self-government for the whole of India. For by then they had counterparts everywhere in the country; and behind those figures, often distorted by the twilight, were ranged so many educated Indians that Curzon himself, for all his Olympian haughtiness, was shaken to the core.

V

OTHERWISE he would not have misused his position as Chancellor of the University of Calcutta to attack the Bengali character; and at least a decade earlier British officials had learnt to equate the Hindu intellectual with the scum of the earth. Its salt was, of course, the rural Jath and the retrograde Pathan, who, being Muslims, had hitherto been openly discriminated against as former rulers of India; and since one of the declared aims of the Mutiny had been restoration of the Mughal imperium, the uprising made their situation worse. They too, on their side, had so resented the rise of the new order that they had shut their eyes to its merits; and in keeping with their isolation their religion had turned revivalist. But, now suddenly, the Civil Service discovered their old-world charm; and though their qualities were supposed to derive from their avoidance of modern education, even those among them who had been seduced by the example of the Hindus were somehow given the benefit of the doubt.

In the meantime Hindu reformers, whether mystic or rationalist, had been denouncing bigotry; and because by a natural transition they began to dream of an Indian nation, Curzon's successor forgot himself so far as to put down in black and white that the British Raj must follow a policy of divide and rule. Fortunately the Calcutta Mohammedans were a small minority—mostly petty traders with a sprinkling of decrepit aristocrats who lived on partible pensions which grew tinier and tinier from generation to generation. So while the indefatigable Mr. Beck continued his work at Aligarh as the nurseryman of Islamic intransigence, pending its transplantation throughout India, Bengal was partitioned to give the Muslims the status of a majority in a region where they were undoubtedly subject to Hindu exploitation. But, to start with, the earnest failed to clinch any contract; and if few Muslims shared the exaltation of the Hindu terrorists, both exulted equally when, as the outcome of the latter's deeds of dramatic violence, the so-called settled fact was unsettled, and the province became again one.



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VI

THE "sun-dried bureaucrats," as they were popularly named, hated the humiliation; and to show their resentment they shifted the capital of the Indian Empire from Calcutta to Delhi. Or so at least the Bengali thought; and while the Northerner's approval of the move seemed to him lying propaganda designed to hide the same diabolical policy of divide and rule, he was quick to remember an old saying that no throne set up in Delhi would stand for long. Recent events have certainly confirmed the prophecy if it can be so described; and yet in 1911 the dissolution of the British Raj was but a patriot's dream, whereas the emergence of Pakistan was a nightmare which even the worst pessimist could never have invented. For all that, Calcutta's equilibrium was rendered unstable; and though the city continued to grow as the centre of the country's commerce and the largest port in Asia, the territories it directly fed upon were reduced to less than half by the new boundaries of reunited Bengal.

Undoubtedly the old province had been too big for efficient administration; and the separation of some regions could now be justified on the ground that if what is culturally one may not be disrupted, then tracts which are linguistically different must also receive their due. But those who were thus hoist with their own petard continued to believe that large areas were taken out of Bengal so as to make Hindus and Muslims equal rivals for British favours; and the fact remains that the rift between the two communities widened as the years passed. At any rate, religious riots became specific to Calcutta soon after the First World War; and their climax was reached in August 1946 when history came full circle and Pax Britannica, together with the empire which was supposed to be founded on it, ended ignominiously in the very city where it had been born in such glory hardly two hundred years before. With it disappeared the unity of India that was considered the greatest achievement of the British rule; and perhaps the special destiny of Calcutta was thus fulfilled.

Formal independence came a year later; and what happened in the Punjab immediately thereafter rightly overshadowed the Great Calcutta Killing, as the local carnage was rather infelicitously named by the newspaper I worked on at the time. All the same, our orgy of death must receive its due honour as the first of its kind in India's history; and since the number massacred was at least ten thousand, it was a sizable affair. For three days the corpses lay in the streets of the country's largest city, exposed to the sun and rain until they had become black and bloated and too putrid for even rats and vultures to feed on; and the bodies thrown into the river collected where it bent under the window of a young girl who went raving mad watching the accumulation. Those in possession of their senses kept their doors bolted; and if thus they missed the fine glow imparted to the monsoon sky by houses blazing away at night, nowhere was there any escape from the stench of rotting carcasses.

VII

DEATH, sudden and violent, was, of course, no stranger to Calcutta; and apart from earlier riots which took their regular, if smaller, toll, Japanese planes killed nearly a thousand dock-workers in the one and only daylight raid on the defenceless city. There was also the 1943 famine; and at its height as many as two thousand dead and dying were picked up daily from the indifferent streets. But callousness, inefficiency, or complacence did not explain the Manichæan outburst of 1946; and those who participated in the mass murders were literally without number, and came from all classes of Indian society. In any case, when at last, through the good offices of an English friend, I could visit my mother, the first thing I heard was how a neighbour of hers, an alumnus of a British university, had incited a mob to finish off a dozen Muslim hawkers whose decomposing remains I had passed to reach my mother's house; and so, on returning home that day, I destroyed the draft of a booklet I had contracted to write, proving

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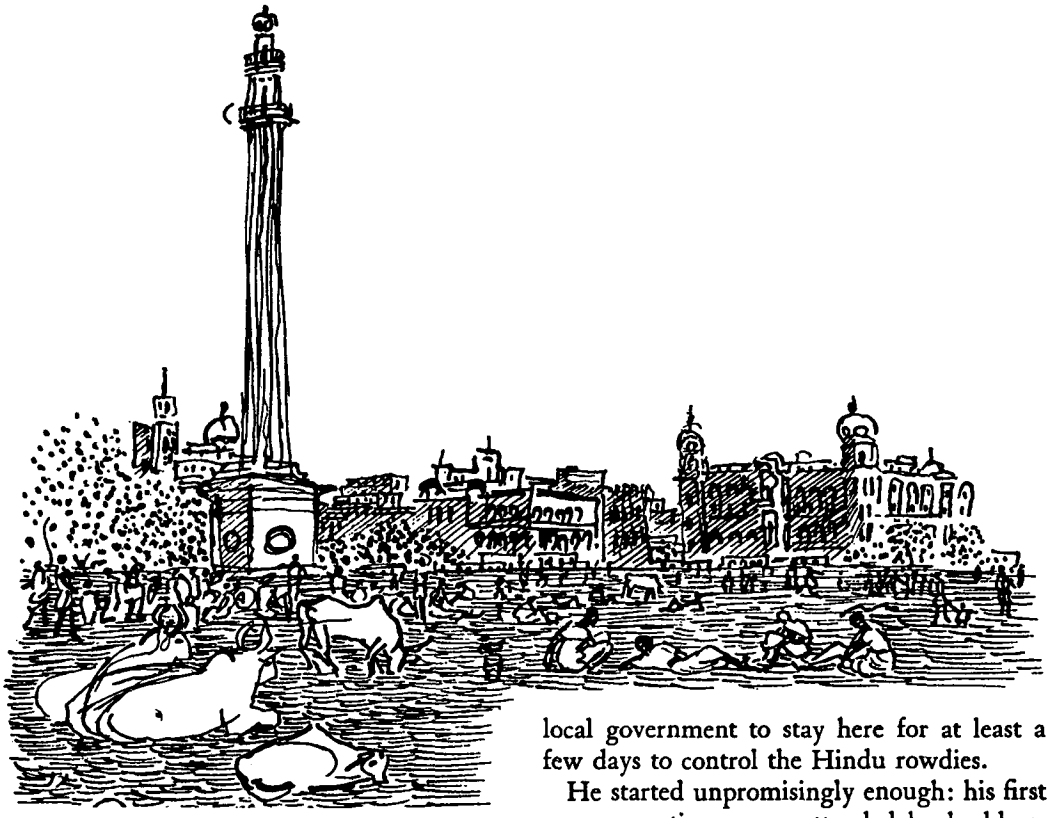

that my countrymen, as a whole, were allergic to physical violence.

Full twelve months had to pass before all the city streets were again safe for every denomination; and if their comparative tranquillity in subsequent years derived largely from the withdrawal of the British, the creation of Pakistan, and the resultant slump in the stocks of communal militancy, the real miracle of Calcutta was wrought by one indomitable man who, more than any other, had brought about the first, disregarded the second, and threw his life away in passive resistance to the third. When it became clear that he had failed to persuade India to remain one, Gandhi decided to return to East Bengal where he had spent many months, trying to end the state of anarchy that had developed there soon after the Calcutta Killing, and from the same cause. But on his way back he found Calcutta in the throes of yet another religious riot; and he could not very well refuse the request of the Muslim head of the local government to stay here for at least a few days to control the Hindu rowdies.

He started unpromisingly enough: his first prayer meetings were attended by hecklers; and the climax came when a violent mob surrounded Gandhi's house demanding that he deliver to them Mr. Suhrawardy, the execrated Chief Minister. But Gandhi offered himself to the crowd; and though high praise is certainly due to Mr. Suhrawardy's courage in joining him not long afterwards, he had by then won the day. Thus on the night of independence a little later the same streets that had borne the burden of so many dead a year before filled magically with a multitude of celebrants; and while Gandhi, all by himself, mourned the end of Indian unity, Hindus and Muslims indulged in spontaneous fraternisation. The sight was as unforgettable as the earlier terror; and if it reinforced the moral that the Bengali is volatile, it disturbed me more as showing how his constructive capacity had declined. Nor did the balance sheet improve on a non-parochial view; and even after admitting that the Gujarati saviour was the greatest of his country's sons since Akbar, the fact remained

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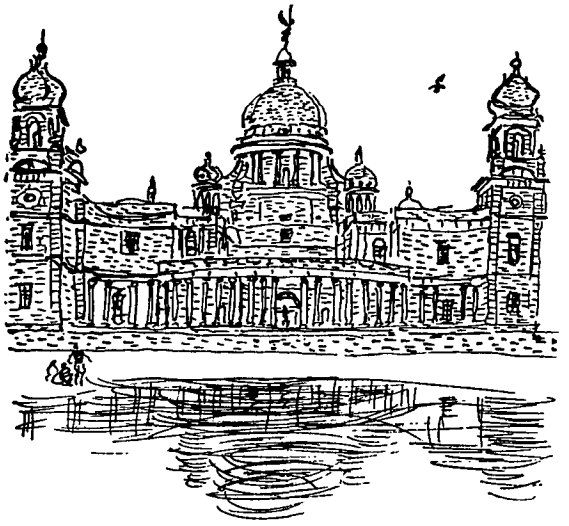
that the scapegoat was the last and the least of British Governors.

VIII

GOKHALE, Gandhi's political guru, used to say that what Bengal thinks today, the rest of India will think tomorrow. But that was when Calcutta was the capital of the Empire; and since the seat of the central power was moved to Delhi, the Bengali has lived withdrawn into himself, bitterly resenting the unwillingness of others to take him at his own valuation. The ghosts of Calcutta's past citizens, like Surendra Nath Banerjea and Chitta Ranjan Das, continue to haunt his waking hours; and unable to repeat their performance as national figures universally acknowledged as such, he refuses to change the mentality he developed as the leader of the permanent opposition in the heyday of British rule. The civic commotions of which he has been a witness or participant in the intervening years have also left their traumatic mark; and with or without just cause he is ready to join violent demonstrations that fail in their undefined object only because authority has learnt to be tactful and to provide, once or twice a year, a few tramcars to burn.



For all that, he is essentially ungregarious; and at least in 1946, and for quite a while later, Calcutta was as fragmented as it had been at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. By the time of independence the old families had, of course, gone for ever; and even the great houses built by men successful in the learned professions were in decay. Yet the "new poor" are no less fanatically loyal to the quarter they inhabit than were their ancestors; and except when they congregate to fight for their chosen side during the football season, or to applaud any demagogue in all seasons of the year, they split into small groups which collect every evening in the roomiest house of the neighbourhood. The old and the young naturally keep apart; and women are almost never present. But the talk is incessant; many cups of milky tea with large quantities of sugar are drunk; and the meeting breaks up only after all reputations outside the circle have been reduced to tatters.

The more sophisticated gather in clubs where the syrupy tea is replaced by weak whiskies; and occasionally there are "ladies' nights" with interludes of inept dancing. Otherwise the pattern of amusement is much the same; and even at cocktail parties that tend to become the one social event universally repeated in the life of the rich, the same faces smile at the same gossip. But, given time, the the observant is bound to notice defections; and he needs only to be comparatively non-attached to discover that the absentees are busy creating their own cliques. Indeed this fissiparous tendency is ubiquitous in Calcutta; and whether it be a school or a college committee, the board of directors of a bank or an insurance company, the presidium of a learned society or an academy of art, would-be dictators are ever faced with potential insurrectionists. Coteries form and dissolve in the literary world as everywhere else; and no Bengali writer, apart from Tagore in his last fifteen years, has yet been able to exist without the plaudits of his own camp and the sneers of opposing factions.

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IX

THE one good point of all this is that it makes for individuality, with the concommittance of a lively mind and a boundless curiosity; and once things at hand seem unworthy of admiration, there is enchantment in distance. Thus even if the Bengali intellectual of today reads fewer foreign books than, say, his Bombay counterpart, he reads with more passion and penetration; and when he speaks of his own literature he speaks of technical experiments, of use and abuse of language, rather than of ennobling themes whereby contemporary Hindi writers claim to judge one another's work. At least one quality of his forefathers has not deserted him: he loves disputations; and years ago, on his return to Calcutta, a friend of mine who had witnessed the beginning of the Russian Revolution, and did not escape until 1921, used to repeat that Bengalis were exactly like Russians. A French resident, on the other hand, never tired of maintaining that this city reminded her of Paris; and a discriminating American once told me that only after reaching Calcutta did he feel that he was in India.

The similarities, if at all real, do not obviously reside in the landscape, architecture, or weather, although the last is, in general, hardly worse than that of Washington; and the "atmosphere" of Calcutta must be allowed to seep slowly in before the eyesores can be disregarded. In 1911, when a start was made with modernising the town, the population envisaged was two millions at the end of time; and already between four to five millions sleep here, while another million come to work for the day. Consequently, as the city has crept southwards, turning localities once inhabited by the Nabobs into swarming slums, the living-space available per head has shrunk to be the smallest in the world; and yet prospects of improvement are dim, because rent control and an adequate building programme accord ill, whereas nothing regulates the flow of newcomers from all directions. Calcutta is specifically Bengali; but nearly thirty-five per cent of its residents are foreign, including ten thousand Europeans; and even among the rest only twenty per cent belong to families which may be described as "cockney" at least metaphorically.

In any case, Calcutta resembles London in the proportion of its population to the total population of West Bengal. About a fifth of the people live in this metropolis; and since the creation of East Pakistan, the province has not enough resource to support such a monstrosity. The Hooghly too is dying: except in the rainy season, it is a tidal reach which cannot expel the silt it receives at high water; and perhaps one day Calcutta will revert to the malarial swamp it once was. Meanwhile it attracts all and sundry; and that not only because it is the one real city in Eastern India, but also because its inhabitants, notwithstanding native peculiarities, are so individuated that strangers are at home in their midst. Most foreigners do not, of course, cease cursing the climate, and complaining exaggeratedly of the filthy streets; and they blame their lack of company on the Bengali's clannishness. But they spend their lives here without learning a word of the local language; they keep to circles narrower than the endemic ones; and after having been here awhile, they want to stay on.

X

AS FOR the tourist in a hurry, Calcutta has nothing to offer except its explosive vitality; and even this contrasts incongruously with the leisurely self-indulgence of the sacred bulls who sit ruminating in the middle of the busiest streets, completely disrupting the traffic, and desolating the man already late for his appointment. Nevertheless the thronged bazaars are an everlasting testimony to its irrepressible energy; and the largest of them—the New Market—is, as a whole, perhaps the biggest emporium in the world, although individual shops with their separate owners may sometimes be no more than a small booth or kiosk. The nearest approach to it, in my limited experience, was the Old Market in Istanbul if that be its name; and some of the North African sooks must also belong to the same genus. But undulled by long familiarity as my response to the latter

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was, I did not find them as exciting as the New Market; and before import control was extended to include even consumer goods, almost everything produced anywhere in the world could be bought there.

Restriction of foreign exchange has likewise forced out of business the big departmental stores owned by British companies; and high taxation, coupled with the rising cost of living, has so reduced the clientèle that smaller bars and chop-houses, especially those which sprang up during the war, have closed down. The foreign clubs are also in difficulty, because their members no longer spend money on the old scale; and though European meals of good quality can still be had at a reasonable price in the bigger restaurants, drinking is a costly luxury. The Calcutta hotels have always been unattractive; and in four or five cabarets dated stars continue to create an illusion of provincial Europe. The Chinese restaurants have generally declined; and the Indian ones, apart from providing hot curries, give a poor account of the country's food which, as in England, is best only in private homes. But the winter racing is still exciting; the tennis tournaments reach a high standard; and if the Eden Gardens now sprout the shoddiest fairs, the great Maidan persists in spite of excrescences and encroachments.

Calcutta's environs are quite dreary. Barrackpore used to be a fine cantonment, as military stations are named in India; and the park with its old trees was worth an afternoon. But the war ruined it; and the still magnificent Botanical Gardens on the other side of the river cannot be approached except through dreadful streets, now that the ferry does not run regularly. Chandernagore, also across the Hooghly, was until lately a French possession full of a faded and yet exotic flavour. However, since what may be termed its integration, even the Gallic esplanade has lost its nostalgic quality; and the road, though the only arterial one in Bengal, is merely overcrowded and tortuous up to Chandernagore. The other historical highway leading out of Calcutta ends at Jessore in Pakistan; and its avenue of ancient banyans has ceased to allure. Nevertheless, as Jamini Roy loves to say when in his denigrating mood, Calcutta alone can become a village without a moment's ambivalence; and a motorist with time to waste will discover scenes of pleasant rusticity all by himself.

XI

So a short visit to Calcutta need not bore; but those who prolong their stay find in the cinema their chief entertainment; and while Indian films are seldom rewarding, perhaps a third of the better British and American pictures comes here sooner or later. In other words, the pleasures that this city offers are not refined enough for a connoisseur bemoaning his enforced exile; and a dilettante out on a quick discovery of India must begin elsewhere. For, as I said at the outset, Calcutta is devoid of archæological interest; its upstanding buildings are not even endearingly ugly; the Bengali stage, once its pride, suffers from recurrent depressions; though classical music attracts enormous crowds, its local travesty is so sentimental as to be tiresome; and Bengal never took to Hindu dancing. Mercifully, however, there is Jamini Roy's studio where a great painter can be seen reinterpreting his inheritance in an idiom all his own; and if his conversation is paid the attention it deserves, more can be learnt about the Indian ethos than from the superb collection of sculpture housed in the Museum.

Calcutta's secret charm must, however, escape the impatient; and only an amateur of history will really love it. For nowhere else in the modern world has a new culture emerged from the deliberate intermingling of two older ones—the peripheral culture of rural Bengal and the cosmopolitan culture of English Whiggery; and to my mind it is the finest legacy of British rule. Initially the hybrid was bound to appear ridiculous; and there is no doubt that its make-up was largely utilitarian. But just as pure altruism often informed the other side, so also the best among us were possessed by intellectual integrity. Or such at least is the impression created in retrospect; and the essence of what

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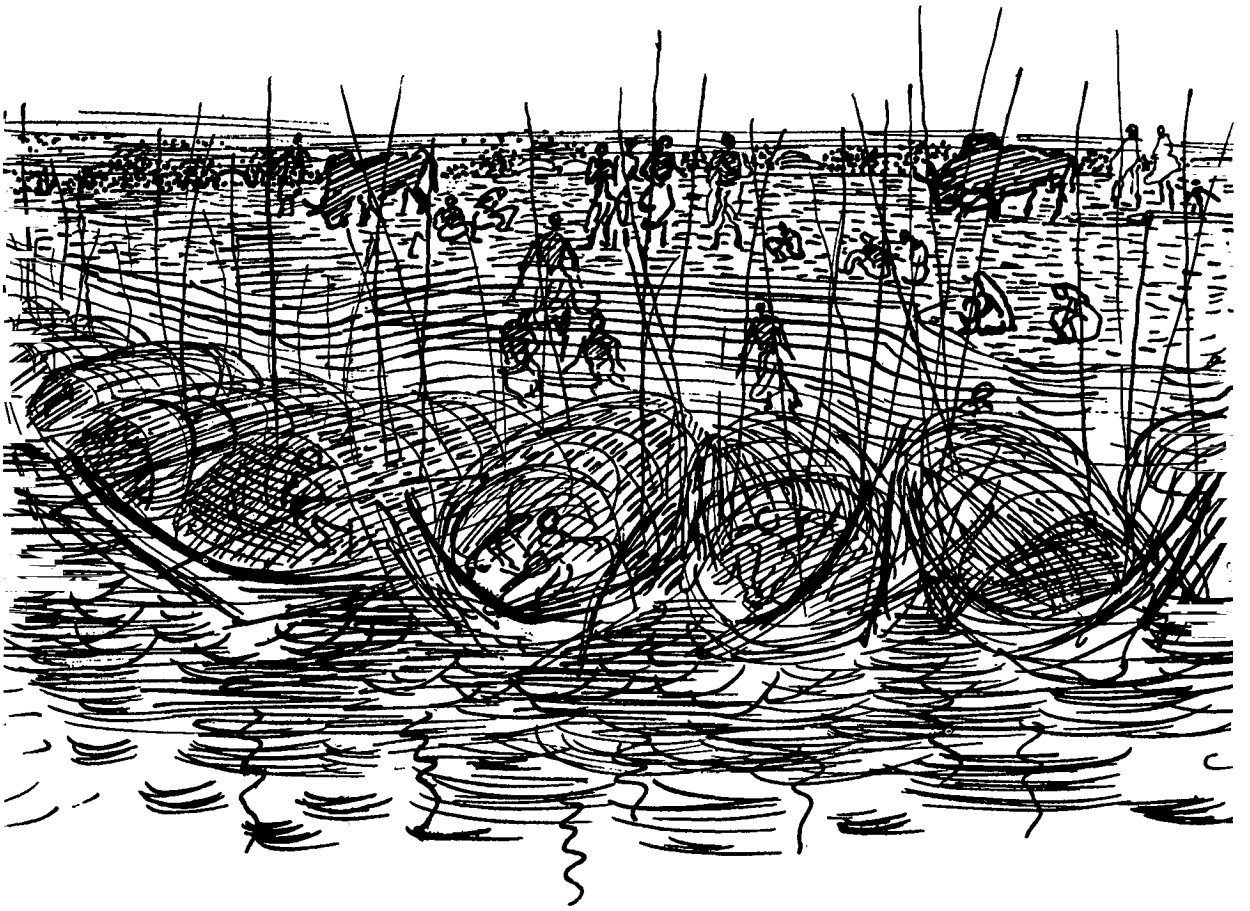
was accomplished has not been lost today. Bengali prose, at any rate, originated in the impact of Western ideas on Ram Mohun Roy and his contemporaries; and Michael Madhusudan Datta remodelled Bengali verse as a memorial to English literature. Extending their discoveries, Rabindranath Tagore evolved a seemingly fresh language; and gradually in the last fifty years it has become the speech of every educated Bengali.

All three of them, and scores of others almost equally great, were either born or nurtured in this metropolis; and that is why throughout the present article I have made no distinction between Bengal and Calcutta. Of course, the former existed long before the people who called the latter into being were known in history; and if Alexander the Great did not penetrate far into India, it was because even he feared the famous war elephants of the Gangaridae, to give the Bengalis their Greek name. But during the last two hundred years the capital has so dominated the province as to become one with it; and this is untrue of another city in the country. Hence the dispute about whom Bombay belongs to; and while Maharashtra and Gujarat can conceivably prosper without Bombay, Bengal will die when parted from Calcutta, as indeed will Calcutta separated from Bengal. Conversely, Bombay, deprived of the Gujaratis, or for that matter of the microscopic Parsi community, may lose its international character; and Calcutta is no less cosmopolitan now that its founders, the British, have abdicated.



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Robert Kenedy

from The Unwalled City

(Paris, 1954 September)

Homage I should like to pay
To my elder brother who had met the autumn
on Saint Michael's Road
In embered songs and under quiet trees,
in startled, scarlet,
Sad and smouldered melodies
while all along the road
The wistful laughing leaves were flying,
—and if for one minute
The summer did not cease to tremble,
the autumn's jest to run
From Paris made my brother hear
the sighing trees—
And all the women who were to die
of hunger in the trains
Still walked with parasols along
the rivers of his youth
That he, amongst others, gave me
to be my childhood and at first
To be my first embrace
under summer shaded chestnut trees,
To be at first my first poem
of the western setting sun that
He and I have found perhaps in Gaul,
forgiven late and powerless
Children of the eastern sun
that honeyed our skin to
An afternoon hue of thinking
and unwritten books
Whencewither unlit sparks of rebellion
crowded like
Hiving bees zooming and hissing past
to gather the last nectar
Of roses, dahlias and dandelions
on the lawn—
But how am I to pay homage
to my elder brother

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Without at once sighing for the years
and chestnut trees and so many rings
Under the bark—
without one look at fading photographs,
And reading books aloud
when strolling in the streets he walked
In Paris gazing after horse-drawn
curtained carriages
And women returning from the races
who, from within the secret
Of their journey to their chosen home,
looked twice at him
When he, just standing on the pavement,
raised his eyes—
I am not like him in the least—
the fraternal ties were torn
And I feel sure he would disown me
for I hate whereas he loved:
I can only curse the land
he loved of eastern sun
And plundered gold: if we met at all,
the shadows of forgiven men
In western cities, we should part
without the kiss of brotherhood,
Unasked-for kinship of magicians
without trade or business
On this honeyed planet, sea-green star
of rising unwalled cities
Where Cæsar's legionaries crossed
the mountains for a universal law

And marching forty miles a day subdued
the wolves that preyed on lambs
Returning then to Rome in triumph
and despair—
In gold, in dreams, in blood
and bathing once again there
In the cloudless sun, the sky that does
not know the constant rain,
—And talking then to men like us
(who were then slaves for certain),
Who knew the galleys triremes
and the markets of the human flesh,
They too perhaps had wished to be
in slavery at least a day
Like we who walked Paris for one day
and could not meet in time,
To meet at least in chains,
in market-places, triremes or galleys

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Thus to sail the blue storms of the blowing
sea
For the islands off the shore of Greece,
the pagan hymns
And Aphrodite rising from the waves
in oracles and shells
Where dolphins leap
and fishermen unfold their nets at dawn—
To meet, if not in Paris, then in kinship
which is richer
Than the golden linking chains of blood
we carried
Through the streets of autumn after wars
with photographs among
The paper-money in our purse
that we never opened yet
Without one glance at faces far beyond
the red horizon of the wars
In which we had to live,
for which we sacrificed, unwilling,
On the altars of the gods as false as we
the childhood of the trees,
The childhood of the nymphs and fauns
who had not yet discovered
Blood and gold in their desires:
At this season of disease,
This disease of being man,
when we reached a point
So much like peaks of mountains,
summits of the stars,
When nothing of the dream remains
to be uncovered
There it lies the continent of blue desires bare—
the unwanted day
Just dawns and dawns again
and all the streets we know so well
Just lead to countries that
we know so well—
This peak, attempted once too often,
yielded like a woman
We would never wish to yield,
and virginity now stamped with knowing
All that men can know of this disease,
the fever that has burnt the years
And molten metal of the flesh:
from hence there is no road
Except the same—
no child unthought of yet,
No death undied, no birth unborn.
Perhaps no miracle again.

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Lionel Trilling

Emma

IT IS possible to say of Jane Austen, as perhaps we can say of no other writer, that the recorded opinions of her work are almost as interesting, and almost as important to think about, as the work itself. This statement, even with its qualifying *almost*, ought to be, on its face, an illegitimate one. We all know that we should come to a writer with no preconceptions, taking no account of any previous opinion. But this, of course, we cannot do. Every established writer exists in the aura of his legend—the accumulated judgment of him that we cannot help being aware of, the image of his personality that has been derived, correctly or incorrectly, from what he has written. In the case of Jane Austen the legend is of an unusually compelling kind. Her very name is a charged one. The homely quaintness of the Christian name, the cool elegance of the surname, seem inevitably to force upon us the awareness of her sex, her celibacy, and her social class. *Charlotte Brontë* rumbles like thunder and drowns out any such special considerations. But *Jane Austen* can by now scarcely fail to imply femininity, and, at that, femininity of a particular kind and in a particular kind of society. And if we speak of names, we note the dismay of many new readers when they learn that certain of her admirers call her Jane, others Miss Austen. Either appellation suggests an unusual relation with this writer, one that doesn't consort with the literary emotions we respect. The new reader perceives from the first that he is not to be permitted to proceed in simple literary innocence. Jane Austen is to be for him not only a writer but an issue. There are those who love her; there are those—perhaps they are fewer but they are violent—who detest her; and the new reader understands that he is being solicited to a fierce partisanship, that he is required to make no mere literary judgment but a decision about his character and personality, about his relation to society and all of life.

And indeed the nature of the partisanship is most intensely personal and social. The matter at issue is: What kind of people like Jane Austen? What kind of people dislike her? Sooner or later the characterisation is made or implied by one side or the other, and with extreme invidiousness. It was inevitable that there should arise a third body of opinion, which holds that Jane Austen herself is not responsible for the faults that are attributed to her by her detractors, but rather the people who admire her for the wrong reasons and in the wrong language and thus create a false image of her. As far back as 1905 Henry James was repelled by what a more recent critic, Mr. Marvin Mudrick, calls "gentle-Janeism" and he spoke of it with great acerbity. James admired Jane Austen; his artistic affinity with her is clear, and he may be thought to have shared her social preferences and preoccupations. Yet James could say of her reputation that it had risen higher than her intrinsic interest warranted: the responsibility for this, he said, lay with "the body of publishers, editors, illustrators, producers of magazines, which have found

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their 'dear,' our dear, everybody's dear Jane so infinitely to their material purpose." In our own day, Dr. Leavis's admiration for Jane Austen is matched in intensity by his impatience with her admirers. Mr. D. W. Harding in a well-known essay has told us how the accepted form of admiration of Jane Austen kept him for a long time from reading her novels, and how he was able to be at ease with them only when he discovered that they were charged with scorn of the very people who set the common tone of admiration. And Mr. Mudrick, in the preface to his book on Jane Austen, speaks of the bulk of the criticism of our author as being "a mere mass of cozy family adulation, self-glorif[ication] . . . and nostalgic latterday enshrinements of the gentle-hearted chronicler of Regency order." It is the intention of Mr. Mudrick's book to rescue Jane Austen from cosiness and nostalgia by representing her as a writer who may be admired for her literary achievement, but who is not to be loved, and of whom it is to be said that certain deficiencies of temperament account for deficiencies of her literary practice.

The impatience with the common admiring view of Jane Austen is not hard to be sympathetic with, the more so because (as Mr. Harding and Mr. Mudrick say) it so often stimulates the self-congratulation of those who give it, and seems to carry a reproof of the sensitivity, reasonableness, and even the courtesy of those who withhold their praise. One may refuse to like any other author and incur no other blame from his admirers than that of lacking taste in this one instance. But not to like Jane Austen is to put oneself under suspicion of a general personal inadequacy and even—let us face it—of a want of breeding.

This is absurd and distasteful. And yet we cannot deal with this unusual—this extravagantly personal—response to a writer simply in the way of condemnation. No doubt every myth of a literary person obscures some part of the truth. But it may express some part of the truth as well. If Jane Austen is carried outside the proper confines of literature, if she has been admired in a fashion that some temperaments find objectionable, even repellent, and that a strict criticism must call illicit, the reason is perhaps to be found not only in the human weakness of her admirers, in their impulse to self-flattery, or in whatever other fault produces their deplorable tone. Perhaps a reason is also to be found in the work itself, in some unusual promise that it seems to make, in some unique hope that it holds out.

II

Of Jane Austen's six great novels, *Emma* is surely the one that is most fully representative of its author. *Pride and Prejudice* is of course more popular. It is the one novel in the canon that "everybody" reads, the one that every publisher of a reprint series includes among his first ten titles. *Pride and Prejudice* deserves its popularity, but it isn't a mere snobbery, it isn't a mere aversion from the popular judgment, that makes thoughtful readers of Jane Austen judge *Emma* to be the greater book. Not the more delightful, but the greater. *Emma* can't boast the brilliant, unimpeded energy of *Pride and Prejudice*, but that is because the energy which *Emma* does indeed have is committed to dealing with a more resistant matter. In this it is characteristic of all three novels of Jane Austen's mature period, of which it is the second. *Persuasion*, the third and last, has a charm that is traditionally—and quite accurately—called "autumnal," and it is beyond question a beautiful book. But *Persuasion*, which was published posthumously and which may not have been revised to meet the author's full intention, does not have the richness and substantiality of *Emma*. As for *Mansfield Park*, the first work of the mature period, it does indeed match *Emma* in point of substantiality, but *Mansfield Park* makes a special and disturbing case. Greatly admired in its own day—far more than *Emma*—it is now disliked by many readers who like everything else that Jane Austen wrote. They are repelled by its heroine and by all that she seems to imply of the author's moral and religious preferences at this moment of her life, for Fanny Price consciously devotes herself

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to virtue and piety, which she achieves by a willing submissiveness that goes against the modern grain. What is more, the author seems to be speaking out against wit and spiritedness and on behalf of dullness and acquiescence, and thus to be condemning her own peculiar talents. *Mansfield Park* is an extraordinary novel, and only Jane Austen could have achieved its profound and curious interest, but its moral tone is antipathetic to the modern taste. I think that no essay I have ever written has met with so much resistance as the one in which I tried to say that *Mansfield Park* was not really a perverse and wicked book. But *Emma*, a work as richly complex as *Mansfield Park*, arouses no such antagonism, and the opinion that holds it to be the greatest of all Jane Austen's novels is, I believe, a correct one.

It is generally agreed that *Emma* is a difficult novel. We in our time are inured to difficult books and we quite like them. But *Emma* is really more difficult than any of the hard books we admire. The difficulty of Proust arises from the sheer amount and complexity of his thought, the difficulty of Joyce from the brilliantly contrived devices of representation, the difficulty of Kafka from a combination of doctrine and mode of communication. With all three, the difficulty is largely literal; it lessens in the degree that we attend closely to what they say; after each sympathetic reading we are the less puzzled. But the difficulty of *Emma* is never overcome. We never know where to have it. If we finish it at night and think we know what it is up to, we wake the next morning to discover that it is up to something else. It has become a different book. The effect is extraordinary, perhaps unique. This book is like a person, it is not to be comprehended fully and finally by any other person. Perhaps it is the point that it is the only one of Jane Austen's novels that has for its title a person's name.

For most people who recognise the difficulty of the book, the trouble begins with Emma herself. Jane Austen was surely aware of what a complexity she was creating in the character of Emma, and no doubt that is why she spoke of her as "a heroine whom no one will like except myself." Yet this puts it in a minimal way—the question of whether we will like or not like Emma does not encompass the actuality of the challenge her character offers. John Henry Newman stated the matter rather more accurately, and very charmingly, in a letter he wrote in 1837. He says that Emma is the most interesting of Jane Austen's heroines, and that he quite likes her. But what is striking in his remark is this sentence: "I feel kind to her whenever I think of her." This does indeed suggest the real question about Emma: whether or not we will find it in our hearts to be kind to her.

Inevitably we are attracted to her, we are drawn by her energy and style, and by the intelligence they generate. Here is her characteristic tone:

> *"Never mind, Harriet, I shall not be a poor old maid; it is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public!"*
>
> * * *
>
> *Emma was sorry; to have to pay civilities to a person she did not like through three long months!—to be always doing more than she wished and less than she ought!*
>
> * * *
>
> *"I do not know whether it ought to be so, but certainly silly things do cease to be silly if they are done by sensible people in an impudent way. Wickedness is always wickedness, but folly is not always folly."*
>
> * * *
>
> *"Oh! I always deserve the best treatment, because I never put up with any other. . . ."*
>
> * * *
>
> [*On an occasion when Mr. Knightley comes to a dinner-party in his carriage, as Emma thinks he should, and not on foot:*] *". . . There is always a look of consciousness or bustle when people come in a way which they know to be beneath them. You think you carry it off very well, I dare say, but with you it is a sort of bravado, an air of affected unconcern; I always observe it whenever I meet you under these circum-*

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stances. Now *you have nothing to try for. You are not afraid of being supposed ashamed. You are not striving to look taller than anybody else.* Now *I shall really be happy to walk into the same room with you."*

We cannot be slow to see what is the basis of this energy and style and intelligence. It is self-love. There is a great power of charm in self-love, although, to be sure, the charm is an ambiguous one. We resent self-love and resist it, yet we are drawn to it, if only it happens to go with a little grace or creative power. Nothing is easier to pardon than the mistakes and excesses of self-love: if we are quick to condemn them, we take pleasure in forgiving them. And with good reason, for they are the extravagance of the first of the virtues, the most basic and biological of the virtues, that of self-preservation.

But I think that we distinguish between our response to the self-love of men and the self-love of women. Surely no woman could have won the forgiveness that has been so willingly granted (after due condemnation) to the self-regard of, say, Yeats and Shaw. We understand self-love to be part of the moral life of all men; and in men of genius we expect it to appear in unusual intensity and we take it to be an essential element of their power. The extraordinary thing about Emma is that she has a moral life as a man is expected to have a moral life. And she doesn't have it as a special instance, as an example of a new kind of woman, like George Eliot's Dorothea Brooke. She has it quite as a matter of course, as a given quality of her nature.

And perhaps that is what Jane Austen meant when she said that no one would like her heroine—and what Newman meant when he said that he felt kind to Emma whenever he thought of her. She needs kindness if she is to be accepted in all her unusual actuality. I say unusual because women in fiction only rarely have that peculiar reality of the moral life that self-love bestows. Most commonly they exist in a moon-like sort of way, shining by the reflected moral life of men. They may be "convincing" or "real" and sometimes, by good luck, they are "delightful" but they seldom exist as men exist—as genuine moral destinies. We don't take note of this; we are so used to their reflected quality that we do not observe it. It is only on the rare occasions when a female character like Emma confronts us that the difference makes us aware of the usual practice of novelists. And we really can't say that novelists are deficient in realism when they present women as they do —because it is the presumption of our society that women's moral life is not as men's. No modern change in the theory of the sexes, no advances in status that women have made, can contradict this. The self-love that we countenance in women is of a limited and passive kind, and we are troubled if their self-love is energetic and assertive as man's is permitted, and expected, to be. Not only men, but women as well, insist on this limitation. They do so not without qualification and exception, not without pleasure when the exception appears, but in general they do insist, and with the quiet effectiveness of an unrealised, an unconscious, intention.

But there is Emma, quite given over to self-love, wholly aware of it, and quite cherishing it. Mr. Knightley rebukes her for heedless conduct, and says, "I leave you to your own reflections." Emma replies: "Can you trust me with such flatterers? Does my vain spirit ever tell me I am wrong?" She loves pre-eminence and praise; she loves power and she is frank to say so.

Inevitably we are drawn to Emma. But inevitably we hold her to be deeply at fault. Her self-love leads her to be a self-deceiver. She can be unkind. And she is a dreadful snob.

Her snobbery is of the first importance in her character, and it is of a special sort. The worst instance of it is very carefully chosen to put her thoroughly in the wrong. We are entirely on her side when she mocks Mrs. Elton's vulgarity, even though we feel that so young a woman oughtn't to set so much store by manners and tone. Mrs. Elton, with her everlasting barouche-landau and her "*caro sposo*" and her talk of her spiritual

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"resources," is herself a snob in the old sense of the word, which meant a vulgar person aspiring to an inappropriate social standing. Mrs. Elton quite deserves Emma's contempt. But when Emma presumes to look down on the young farmer, Robert Martin, and undertakes to keep little Harriet Smith from marrying him, she makes a truly serious mistake. It is a mistake of nothing less than national import.

HERE we should observe that *Emma* is a novel that is touched—lightly but quite certainly— by national feeling. Perhaps this is because the Prince Regent had expressed his admiration for *Mansfield Park* and his willingness to have the author dedicate her next book to him—it is a circumstance which allows us to suppose that Jane Austen thought of herself, at this point in her career, as having, by reason of the success of her art, a relation to the national ethic. At any rate, there appears in *Emma* a tendency to conceive of a specifically English ideal of life. Mr. Knightley speaks of Frank Churchill as falling short of the demands of this ideal: "No, Emma," he says, "your amiable young man can be amiable only in French, not in English. He may be very 'aimable,' have very good manners, and be very agreeable; but he can have no English delicacy towards the feelings of other people: nothing really amiable about him." Again, in a curiously impressive moment in the book, we are given a detailed description of the countryside as seen by the party at Bonwell Abbey, and this comment follows: "It was a sweet view—sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture [English agriculture, of course, is meant], English comfort, seen under a sun bright without being oppressive." This is a larger consideration than the occasion would appear to require; there seems no reason to expect this almost solemn vision of England's green and pleasant land. Or none until we note that the description of the view closes thus: "and at the bottom of this bank, favourably placed and sheltered, rose the Abbey-Mill Farm, with meadows in front, and the river making a close and handsome curve around it." Abbey-Mill Farm is the property of young Robert Martin, for whom Emma has expressed a principled social contempt, and the little burst of strong feeling has the effect, among others, of pointing up the extremity and the large import of Emma's mistake.

It is often said, sometimes by way of reproach, that Jane Austen took no account in her novels of the great political events of her lifetime, nor of the great social changes that were going on in England. ". . . In Jane Austen's novels," says Arnold Hauser in his *Social History of Art*, "social reality was the soil in which characters were rooted but in no sense a problem which the novelist made any attempt to solve or interpret." The statement, true in a degree, goes too far. There is in *some* sense an interpretation of social problems in Jane Austen's contrivance of the situation of Emma and Robert Martin. The yeoman class had always held a strong position in English class feeling, and at this time especially only stupid or ignorant people felt privileged to look down upon it. Mr. Knightley, whose social position is one of the certainties of the book, as is his freedom from any trace of snobbery, speaks of young Martin, who is his friend, as a "gentleman farmer," and it is clear that he is on his way to being a gentleman pure and simple. And nothing was of greater importance to the English system at the time of the French Revolution than the relatively easy recruitment to the class of gentlemen. It made England unique among European nations, and Alexis de Tocqueville in *The Old Régime and the French Revolution* advances it as the chief reason why England was not susceptible to revolution as France was.

> *It was not merely parliamentary government, freedom of speech, and the jury system that made England so different from the rest of contemporary Europe. There was something still more distinctive and more far-reaching in its effects. England was the only country in which the caste system had been totally abolished, not merely modified. Nobility and commoners*

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joined forces in business enterprises, entered the same professions, and—what is still more significant—intermarried. The daughter of the greatest lord in the land could marry a "new" man without the least compunction. . . .

Though this curious revolution (for such in fact it was) is hidden in the mists of time, we can detect traces of it in the English language. For several centuries the word "gentleman" has had in England a quite different application from what it had when it originated. . . . A study of the connection between the history of language and history proper would certainly be revealing. Thus if we follow the mutations in time and place of the English word "gentleman" (a derivative of our gentilhomme), *we find its connotation being steadily widened in England as the classes draw nearer to each other and intermingle. In each successive century we find it being applied to men a little lower in the social scale. Next, with the English, it crosses to America. And now in America it is applicable to all male citizens, indiscriminately. Thus its history is the history of democracy itself.**

Emma's snobbery, then, is nothing less than a contravention of the best—and safest—tendencies of English social life. "A young farmer," she takes occasion to remark in her sententious way, "is the very last sort of person to raise my curiosity. The yeomanry are precisely the order of people with whom I feel that I can have nothing to do. A degree or two lower, and a creditable appearance might interest me; I might hope to be useful to their families in some way or other. But a farmer can need none of my help, and is therefore in one sense as much above my notice as in every other he is below it." This is carefully contrived to seem as dreadful as possible—it almost constitutes an extravagance in the portraiture.

Snobbery is the grossest fault that arises from Emma's self-love, but it is not the only fault. We must also take account of her capacity for unkindness, which can be impulsive and brutal as in the witticism directed to Miss Bates at the picnic (which makes one of the most memorable scenes in the whole range of English fiction) or extended and systematic as in her conspiracy with Frank Churchill to quiz Jane Fairfax. We know her to be a gossip, at least when she is tempted by Frank Churchill. She has no compunctions about taking over the rule of Harriet Smith's life. One critic has accused her, on the ground of her own estimate of herself, of a want of tenderness, and has even said of her that she is without normal sexual responsiveness.

WHY then should anyone be kind to Emma? There are several reasons, and one of them is that we come into an unusual intimacy with her. We see her in all the elaborateness of her mistakes, in all the details of her wrong conduct. The narrative technique of the novel brings us very close to her and makes us aware of each misstep she will make. The relation that develops between ourselves and her becomes a strange one—it is the relation that exists between our ideal self and our ordinary fallible self. We become Emma's helpless conscience, her unavailing guide. Her fault is the classic one of *hubris*, excessive pride, and it yields the classic result of blindness, of an inability to interpret experience to the end of perceiving reality, and we are aware of each false step, each wrong conclusion, that she will make. Our hand goes out to hold her back and set her straight, but it cannot reach her.

There is an intimacy anterior to this. We come close to Emma because, in a strange way, she permits us to, even invites us to, by being very close to herself. When we have said that her fault is *hubris* or arrogant self-love, we must make an immediate modification, for her self-love, though it involves her in considerable self-deception, does not lead

* Tocqueville represents the class feelings of the English as being more lenient than in fact they were. But the difference between caste and class and the political effect of the social mobility which is represented by the "gentleman" are as important as Tocqueville says they are.

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her to the ultimate self-deception—she believes she is clever, she insists that she is right, but she never says she is *good*. A consciousness is always at work in her, a sense of what she ought to be and ought to do. It is not an infallible sense, anything but that, yet she does not need us, or the author, or Mr. Knightley, to tell her, for example, that she is jealous of Jane Fairfax and acts badly to her; it is she herself who says that "she never saw Jane Fairfax without feeling that she had injured her." She is never offended, she never takes the high self-defensive line, when once her bad conduct is made apparent to her; and she never asserts her moral superiority over those she has injured. Her sense of her superiority leads her to what she learns to call the "insufferable vanity" of believing "herself in the secret of everybody's feelings" and to the "unpardonable arrogance" of "proposing to arrange everybody's destiny," yet it is an innocent vanity and an innocent arrogance which, when frustrated and exposed, do not make her bitter but only ashamed. That is why, bad as her behaviour may be, we are willing to be implicated in it. It has been thought that in the representation of Emma there is "an air of confession," that Jane Austen was taking account of "something offensive" that she and others had observed in her own earlier manner and conduct, and whether or not this is so, it suggests the quality of intimacy which the author contrives that we shall feel with the heroine.

Then, when we try to explain our kindness to Emma, we ought to remember that many of her wrong judgments and actions are directed to a very engaging end, to a very right purpose. She believes in her own distinction and vividness and wants everything and everyone around her to be equally distinguished and vivid. It is indeed an arrogance, as she comes to see, that she should undertake to arrange Harriet Smith's destiny, that she plans to "form" Harriet, to use her, as it were, as the mere material, or stuff, of a creative act. Yet the destiny is never meanly conceived, the act is meant to be truly creative—she wants Harriet to be a distinguished and not a commonplace person, she wants nothing to be commonplace, she requires of life that it be well-shaped and impressive and alive. It is out of her insistence that the members of the picnic shall begin being witty and cease being dull that there comes her famous insult to Miss Bates. Her requirement that life be vivid and shapely is too often expressed in terms of social deportment—she sometimes talks like a governess or a comic dowager—but it is, in its essence, a poet's demand.

She herself says that she lacks tenderness, although she makes the self-accusation in her odd belief that Harriet possesses this quality; Harriet is soft and "feminine," but she is not tender. One critic, as I have said, has associated Emma's deficiency in tenderness with her being not susceptible to men. Yet there is something impressive and right about Emma's apparent sexual coolness. She makes great play about the feelings, and about the fineness of the feelings, that one should have; she sets great store by literature, although she does not read the books she prescribes for herself, and makes it a condemnation of Robert Martin that he does not read novels. Yet although, like Don Quixote and Emma Bovary, her mind is shaped and deceived by fiction, she is remarkable for the actuality and truth of her sexual feelings. Inevitably she considers that Frank Churchill will fall in love with her and she with him, but others are more deceived about the outcome of this expectation that she is—it takes but little time for her to see that she does not really respond to Churchill, that her feeling for him is no more than the lively notice that an attractive and vivacious girl takes of an attractive and vivacious young man. As little as with any heroine of Bernard Shaw or of D. H. Lawrence is sentimental sexuality a part of her nature, however much she feels it ought to be part of Harriet Smith's nature. When the right time comes, she chooses her husband wisely and seriously and eagerly.

There is, then, sufficient reason to be kind to Emma, and perhaps for nothing so much as the hope she expresses when she first begins to understand her mistakes, that she

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will become, as she says, "more acquainted with herself." And, indeed, all through the novel she has sought better acquaintance with herself, not wisely, not adequately, but assiduously. How modern a quest it is, and how thoroughly it confirms Dr. Leavis's judgment that Jane Austen is the first truly modern novelist of England! "In art," a critic has said, "the decision to be revolutionary usually counts for very little. The most radical changes have come from personalities who were conservative and even conventional. . . ."* Jane Austen, conservative and even conventional as she was, perceived the nature of the deep psychological change which accompanied the inception of democratic society—she was aware of the increase of the psychological burden of the individual, she understood the new necessity of conscious self-definition and self-criticism, of the need to make private judgments of reality. And there is no reality about which the modern person is more uncertain and more anxious than the reality of himself. For each of us, as for Emma, it is a sad, characteristic hope to become more acquainted with oneself.

III

But the character of Emma herself is not the only reason for the difficulty of the novel. We must also take into account the particular genre in which the novel is conceived. It is a genre which has the effect of bringing into the most extreme contrast the brilliant modernity of Emma, and its nature may be understood through the characters of Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Bates.

Sir Walter Scott in his famous review of *Emma* said that Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Bates were a mistake, that "characters of folly and simplicity," such as they are, are "apt to become tiresome in fiction as in real society." But Scott is wrong. Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Bates are remarkably interesting, even though they have been created on a system of character portrayal that is no longer supposed to have validity—they exist by reason of a single trait which they display whenever they appear. Miss Bates is possessed of continuous speech and of a perfectly free association of ideas which is quite beyond her control; once launched into utterance, it is impossible for her to stop. Mr. Woodhouse, Emma's father, has no other purpose in life than to preserve his health and equanimity, and no other subject of conversation than the means of doing so. The commonest circumstances of life present themselves to him as dangerous, to walk or to drive or to eat an egg not coddled in the prescribed way is to invite destruction. Nothing must change in his familial situation; he deplores the propensity of young people to marry, and to marry *strangers* at that.

Of the two "characters of folly and simplicity," Mr. Woodhouse is the more remarkable because he so entirely, so recklessly, embodies a principle, the profundity of which will be clear to anyone who recalls Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, especially the fifth chapter. (And can we fail to see how much of the theory of modern anthropology, æsthetics, and the psychology of perception are based upon Mr. Woodhouse's remark about Mrs. Elton: ". . . Considering we never saw her before, she seems a very pretty sort of young lady"?) Almost in the degree that Jane Austen was delighted by personal energy, by "progressive" tendencies, she was fascinated by persons capable of extreme inertness, who, like Mr. Wodehouse and Lady Bertram of *Mansfield Park*, disclose the "conservative" and "regressive" impulse that, as Freud tells us, lies hidden in the organic instincts. She does not judge them harshly, as we incline to do—we who scarcely recall how important in the Christian *Aberglaube* the dream of *rest* once was.

But if Mr. Woodhouse has a more speculative interest than Miss Bates, there is not much to choose between their achieved actuality as fictional characters. They are, as I have said, created on a system of character portrayal that we regard as primitive, but the reality of existence which fictional characters may have doesn't depend only upon what

* Harold Rosenberg, "Revolution and the Idea of Beauty," Encounter, December 1953.

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they do, but also upon what others do to or about them, upon the way they are regarded and responded to. And in the community of Highbury, Miss Bates and Mr. Woodhouse are sacred. They are fools, to be sure, as everyone knows. But they are fools of a special and transcendent kind. They are innocents—of such is the kingdom of heaven. They are children, who have learned nothing of the guile of the world. And their mode of existence is the key to the nature of the world of Highbury, which is the world of the idyll. London is only sixteen miles away—Frank Churchill can ride there and back for a haircut—but the proximity of the life of London serves to emphasize the spiritual geography of Highbury. The weather plays a great part in *Emma*: in no other novel of Jane Austen's is the succession of the seasons, and cold and heat, of such consequence, as if to make the point which the pastoral idyll characteristically makes, that the only hardships that man should properly endure are meteorological. In the Forest of Arden we suffer only "the penalty of Adam, The seasons' difference," and Amiens' song echoes the Duke's words:

> *"Here shall he see*
> *No enemy*
> *But winter and rough weather."*

Some explicit thought of the pastoral idyll is in Jane Austen's mind, and with all the ambivalence that marks the attitude of *As You Like It* toward the dream of man's life in nature and simplicity. Mrs. Elton wants to make the strawberry party at Donwell Abbey into a *fête champêtre*: "It is to be a morning scheme, you know, Knightley; quite a simple thing. I shall wear a large bonnet, and bring one of my little baskets hanging on my arm. Here,—probably this basket with pink ribbon. Nothing can be more simple, you see. And Jane will have such another. There is to be no form or parade—a sort of gipsy party. —We are to walk about your gardens, and gather the strawberries ourselves, and sit under trees;—and whatever else you may like to provide, it is to be all out of doors—a table spread in the shade, you know. Every thing as natural and simple as possible. Is not that your idea?" To which Knightley replies: "Not quite. My idea of the simple and natural will be to have the table spread in the dining-room. The nature and the simplicity of gentlemen and ladies, with their servants and furniture, I think is best observed by meals within doors. When you are tired of eating strawberries in the garden, there will be cold meat in the house."

That the pastoral idyll should be mocked as a sentimentality by its association with Mrs. Elton, whose vulgarity in large part consists of the flaunting of the cheapened version of high and delicate ideals, and that Knightley should answer her as he does—this is quite in accordance with our expectation of Jane Austen's judgment. Yet it is only a few pages later that the members of the party walk out to see the view and we get that curious passage about how sweet the view is, "sweet to the eye and to the mind." And we cannot help feeling that "English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a sun bright without being oppressive" make an England perceived—if but for the moment—as an idyll.

THE idyll is not a genre which nowadays we are likely to understand. Or at least not in fiction, the art which we believe must always address itself to actuality. The imagination of felicity is difficult for us to exercise. We feel that it is a betrayal of our awareness of our world of pain, that it is politically inappropriate. And yet one considerable critic of literature thought otherwise. Schiller is not exactly of our time, yet he is remarkably close to us in many ways and he inhabited a world scarcely less painful than ours, and he thought the genre of the idyll had an important bearing upon social and political ideas.

As Schiller defines it, the idyll is the literary genre that "presents the idea and description of an innocent and happy humanity." The practice of poets has been to set their idylls in pastoral surroundings and in the infancy of humanity; it is thus that they most easily achieve the remoteness from the "artificial refinements of fashionable society" which is

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implied by innocence and happiness. But this practice is merely accidental, not of the essence of the idyll, which is simply the portrayal of "a state of innocence, which means a state of harmony and peace with himself and the external world." For Schiller the political importance of the genre is clear: "A state such as this is not merely met with before the dawn of civilisation; it is also the state to which civilisation aspires, as to its last end, if only it obeys a determined tendency in its progress. The idea of a similar state, and the belief in the possible reality of this state, is the only thing that can reconcile man with all the evils to which he is exposed in the path of civilisation. . . ." And Schiller represents it as the poet's function—his political function—to gather up the elements of actual life that do partake of innocence, and that the predominant pain of life leads us to forget, to persuade us that innocence is possible.

But the idyll has an æsthetic deficiency of which Schiller is quite aware. It excludes the idea of activity, which alone can satisfy the mind. Or at least the idyll as it is traditionally conceived makes this exclusion. But Schiller finds it possible to imagine a transmutation of the genre in which the characteristic calm of the idyll shall be "the calm that follows accomplishment, not the calm of indolence—the calm that comes from equilibrium re-established between the faculties and not from the suspending of their exercise."

It is strange that Schiller, as he projects this as yet unrealised possibility, does not recur to what he has previously said about comedy. To tragedy he assigns the adjective *sublime*, which implies achieving greatness by intense effort and strength of will, while to comedy he assigns the adjective *beautiful*, which implies the achievement of freedom by an activity which is easy and natural. "The noble task of comedy," he says, "is to produce and keep up in us this freedom of mind." Comedy and the idyll, then, would seem to have affinity with each other. Schiller does not observe this, but Shakespeare knew it—the power and charm of *As You Like It* consists of bringing together the idyll and comedy, of making the idyll the subject of comedy, even of satire, yet without negating it. The mind teases the heart but does not mock it. The unconditioned freedom that the idyll hypothecates is shown to be impossible, yet in the demonstration a measure of freedom is gained.

So in *Emma* Jane Austen contrives an idyllic world, or the closest approximation to it that the genre of the novel will permit, and brings into contrast with it the actualities of the social world, of the modern self. In the precincts of Highbury there are no bad people, and no adverse judgments to be made. Only a modern critic would think to call Mr. Woodhouse an idiot and an old woman; in the novel he is called "the kind-hearted, polite old gentleman." Only Emma with her modern consciousness, comes out with it that Miss Bates is a bore, and only Emma can give herself to the thought that Mr. Weston would be a "higher character" if he were not so simple and open-hearted. It is from outside Highbury that the peculiarly modern traits of insincerity and vulgarity come, in the person of Frank Churchill and Mrs. Elton. With the exception of Emma herself, every person in Highbury lives in harmony and peace—even Mr. Elton, had Emma but let him alone!—and not merely because they are simple and undeveloped: Mr. Knightley and Mrs. Weston are no less innocent than Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Bates, and if they please us and do not bore us by a perfection of manner and feeling which is at once lofty and homely, it is because we accept the assumptions of the idyllic world which they inhabit—we have been led to believe that man may live in "harmony and peace with himself and the external world."

The quiet of Highbury, the unperturbed spirits of Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Bates, the instructive perfection of Mr. Knightley and Mrs. Weston, constitute much of the charm of *Emma*. Yet the idyllic stillness of the scene and the loving celebration of what, for better or worse, is fully formed and changeless, are

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of course not what is decisive in the success of the novel. What is decisive is the idea of activity and development. No one has put better or more eloquently what part this idea plays in Jane Austen's work than an anonymous critic writing in *The North British Review* in 1870.

> *Even as a unit, man is only known to her in the process of his formation by social influences. She broods over his history, not over his individual soul and its secret workings, nor over the analysis of its faculties and organs. She sees him, not as a solitary being completed in himself, but only as completed in society. Again, she contemplates virtues, not as fixed quantities, or as definable qualities, but as continual struggles and conquests, as progressive states of mind, advancing by repulsing their contraries, or losing ground by being overcome. Hence again the individual mind can only be represented by her as a battle-field where contending hosts are marshalled, and where victory inclines now to one side and now to another. A character therefore unfolded itself to her, not in statuesque repose, not as a model without motion, but as a dramatic sketch, a living history, a composite force, which could only exhibit what it was by exhibiting what it did. Her favourite poet Cowper taught her,*
>
> *"By ceaseless action all that is subsists."*

The mind as a battlefield: it does not consort with some of the views of Jane Austen that are commonly held. Yet this is indeed how she understood the mind. Her representation of battle is the truer because she could imagine the possibility of peace and victory—she did not shrink from victory.

And the anonymous *North British* critic goes on to say another good thing, a rather startling one. He says that the mind of Jane Austen was "saturated" with a "Platonic idea." In speaking of her ideal of "intelligent love"—the phrase is perfect—he says that it is based on the "Platonic idea that the giving and receiving of knowledge, the active formation of another's character, or the more passive growth under another's guidance, is the truest and strongest foundation of love." It is an ideal that not all will think possible of realisation and that some of us will not want to give even a theoretical assent to. Yet if we regard the idea not in the actual world but in the idyllic scene of *Emma*, many of us will consent to its attractiveness. It proposes to us the hope of victory in the battle that the mind must wage; and it speaks of the expectation of allies in the battle, of the possibility of community—not in actuality, not now, but perhaps in the future, for are we not led to believe, or almost believe, that it did exist in the past?

The impulse to believe that the world of Jane Austen really did exist leads to notable error. "Jane Austen's England" is the thoughtless phrase which is often made to stand for the England of the years in which our author lived, although any serious history will make it sufficiently clear that the real England was not the England of her novels, except as it gave her licence to imagine the England which we call hers. This England, especially as it is represented in *Emma*, is an idyll. All too often it is confused with the actual England, and the error of the identification ought always to be remarked. Yet the same sense of actuality that corrects the error should not fail to recognise the force of the ideal that leads many to make the error. To represent the possibility of the control of the personal life, of becoming more acquainted with ourselves, of the community of intelligent love—this is indeed to make an extraordinary promise and to hold out a rare hope. We ought not to be shocked and repelled if some among us think there really was a time when such promises and hopes were realised. Nor ought we to be entirely surprised if, when they speak of the person who makes such promises and holds out such hopes, they represent her as not merely a novelist, if they find it natural to deal with her as a figure of legend and myth.

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DISCUSSION

A Troubled Dialogue

[This exchange of letters between Ivan Anissimov, editor of "Inostrannaya Literatura" ("Foreign Literature"), and Ignazio Silone originated in a conference held in Zürich from September 24th to 27th, 1956, by the editors of a number of literary magazines from both Eastern and Western Europe. At the end of the conference, Signor Silone submitted the following questions to the members of the Soviet delegation.

1. *The distinguished Russian novelist Michail Sholokhov in his speech to the Twentieth Party Congress declared that, as a result of the controls enforced on writers by the State, Russian literature has in recent decades been a literature of "dead souls." Have these controls been relaxed, and if so, to what extent? Do any controls still exist?*
2. *Has the open denunciation of the "abuse of the personality cult" and "violations of socialist legality" begun to produce any works of literature?*
3. *Now that the climate has "thawed" and that intellectual activities are being liberalised, do you not think it is time the Russian public was allowed to read, not only the anti-American satires or run-of-the-mill novels of certain Western writers, but also the works of the independent Left?*
4. *Russian historians and novelists will no doubt ultimately give their own account of what you have officially admitted to be the objective truth about the recent past. In the meantime, however, might it not be useful to acquaint Russian readers with a number of reputable works on the subject which have already appeared elsewhere? I am thinking in particular of the following books:*
   Alexander Weissberg: "The Accused"
   Joseph Czapski: "La terre inhumaine"
   Gustav Herling: "A World Apart"
   Elinor Lipper: "Eleven Years in Siberia."
   If you have not read these books, would you like me to ask the publishers to send them to you?
5. *The recent changes in Russia have provoked a great deal of plain speaking in Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia, especially among writers and artists. Did any echo of these discussions reach the ears of Soviet writers?*

The Russian editors promised to answer these questions, but it was not until three months later that the following text, signed by Ivan Anissimov, reached Ignazio Silone in Rome. This letter, together with Signor Silone's reply, was published in "Tempo Presente," from which we herewith reprint excerpts that we feel will interest the readers of ENCOUNTER.—*Eds.*]

I. IVAN ANISSIMOV'S LETTER

I AM grateful to you, Signor Silone, for your invitation to join in a discussion, and I think that a frank exchange on the problems in which we are both interested will help you to gain a clearer understanding of the complex contradictions of contemporary culture.

I should like not only to reply to your questions but also to pose some of my own.

At the outset, however, one must advance a few general considerations.

Quite apart from whether one likes it or not, capitalism and socialism do in fact *co-exist* in our world at the present time. From this one must draw the full consequences, and any contemporary political concept taken alone can have no meaning unless considered in the light of this dominant characteristic of the present epoch. And although the ideological divergences between the two co-existing systems run very deep, it is extremely important to find ways of continuing the dialogue between them, even at a moment like the present when all the spectres of the "cold war" have emerged once more, and the blackest forces of reaction are spreading their slanders and brandishing the big stick.

At present, reaction is using the events in Hungary to wage the most unbridled campaign against the socialist camp. It becomes more and more clear each day that in Hungary, reaction was playing for high stakes. Fortunately for the world, it lost the game.

I know too well the price of the blood spilt in Hungary by the defenders of socialism and the future, to leap to any over-hasty conclusions. But I am convinced that when you take cognisance of

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these events in the light of truth, and not of wild and malicious insinuations, then they will help you and me to understand each other better. Indeed, they have shown, with a fearful and naked clarity, that when we met in Zurich [i.e. late September 1956], we were only a step or two away from fascist horror, and that a savage enemy was lurking just behind the door where we had met to discuss so many things.

If one does not grasp the truly monstrous schemes hatched by reaction, then one is liable to fall into a most tragic position. That is why the article by J.-P. Sartre in *L'Express* on the events in Hungary makes such a sorry impression. Neither Sartre's intelligence nor his literary talent can save him when he plunges head-first into the mire of calumny. We shall not conjecture what sort of future awaits Sartre—a further sinking into the marsh, or some effort or other to look the truth in the face. We should like to believe in the latter hypothesis.

You, Signor Silone, as one who took part in the struggle against fascism in Spain, know what it means to stand and bar the way to fascism; that is what the Hungarian defenders of the people's democracy and the Soviet soldiers had to do, and they did not hesitate. They saved the world and Hungary, over which the malevolent shade of Horthy's followers had already begun to stretch. We grieve for the sacrifices of these defenders of peace, socialism, and democracy, and consider it our duty to protect their memory from calumny. . . .

I do not feel that my digression on this burning topic is superfluous. Having made it, I shall turn at once to the various questions you have raised.

Anyone who approaches Soviet literature from the outside should recognise that the criteria he has become accustomed to in his own country are far from being always universal. Soviet literature emerged out of the heart of a great socialist upheaval and is distinguished by many characteristics which had not until then been discernible to even the most sensitive seismographs of criticism. It is a literature containing much innovation, which at times may appear incomprehensible. It is *imperative* that one should study this literature in depth, and that one should approach it without prejudice.

The first principle, without which it is impossible to gain a correct image of Soviet literature, is the *principle of continuous expansion* of its sphere of action, which indeed is directly linked with the socialist nature of our literature. To say that it is a literature of the popular masses is not just a matter of words—this is the very essence of its being. The æsthetic originality of socialist realism cannot be grasped if we forget that here is a literature exerting *an ever wider influence on the masses* in an unprecedented way. . . . Belief in, and the deepest respect for, the aspirations and exigencies of the masses are the imprescriptible characteristic of socialist realism: it is hardly necessary to draw a parallel here with the principles that govern the bourgeois æsthetic.

But does this not prevent the artist from revealing himself? No, on the contrary, it helps him to find himself, having thrown overboard the illusions of bourgeois individualism. One finds valuable examples in this connection in Eluard, Aragon, and Pablo Neruda.

Let me now reply to the particular questions you have raised.

1. Mikhail Sholokhov never at any time linked his criticisms with any directives of any sort from the government in relation to writers. I can only assume that someone must have led you into error. . . .

It may be appropriate at this point to give a further clarification: socialist realism is by no means the only form of literature to be found in the Soviet Union. It is a new creative method, but naturally enough not every book is written on the basis of that method. It is embodied in the best and most progressive works, those works in which literature receives a new forward impulse, and man is enriched by newly discovered spiritual values. The works of Gorky and Mayakovsky are of this kind, as are those of our extraordinary Furmanov, about whom so little is known in the West, and those of Fadeyev and Sholokhov. . . . It is necessary to grasp the fact that the concept of Soviet literature is a great deal wider than the concept of socialist realism. Old, pre-socialist forms of realism continue to exist. The works of a writer like Sergeev-Tsensky, for example, a writer whom we greatly admire, are of this kind, for they have not undergone that profound transformation which produced such a fresh and powerful result in Aleksey Tolstoy's novel, *Road to Calvary*, or in his historical novel, *Peter the First*. In spite of this, Sergeev-Tsensky, who has published a multitude of new novels under the Soviet régime, is one of our best-known and most highly esteemed writers. . . .

Naturally enough, we also have many novels and works of poetry which, in spite of their authors' good intentions, fail to transcend the bounds of naturalistic representation, and remain earthbound, naïve, touching only the surface of things. Most of those works whose main characteristic is what we cuttingly refer to as "varnishing" reality belong precisely to this naturalistic type. It is also natural that there should exist eclectic works in which at times the most disparate influences appear.

Socialist realism, with all its originality, its courageous refusal to be satisfied, its drive towards the future, its confidence in the triumph of the socialist ideal, its wise understanding of life and ability to probe into life's most complex conflicts, naturally takes tangible shape in the major achievements of Soviet literature, but is not in the least an automatically guaranteed quality. We reject any "recipe" for socialist realism, as we reject every other dogma.

I should like at this point to mention the example of Valentin Ovechkin, in whose extremely vivid stories can be seen a new way of looking at certain images, drawn from living reality, but which had hitherto appeared often in a naturalistically superficial guise and had become almost commonplaces. For Ovechkin himself, these preliminary explorations into the depths of reality may well be a preparation for a full-scale work, which may well be a major event and hold the greatest importance for literature. As far as Soviet literature as a whole

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is concerned, Ovechkin's stories undoubtedly exert a profound influence and help to break up the old naturalistic moulds used in portraying peasant life, the sphere in which Ovechkin's creative interests chiefly lie.

2. Soviet literature is, at the present time, in a complex state of creative tension. The liquidation of the legacies of the cult of personality and a careful study of our own experience are the prerequisites for giving a fresh upward impulse to our literature. It seems to us that we are facing a future that will bring solid achievements to Soviet literature, but you, as a writer, must know that one cannot foretell with complete accuracy just when such works will emerge. We are, of course, talking here not of sensational nine-day wonders, of which there is never any lack, but of works that match up to the most exacting valuation.

Have we a sufficiently sound basis for a prophecy so rich in promise? Yes, since the possibilities open to the Soviet writer are limitless; he must reflect the changes taking place all about him, show what new things are emerging in the life of the people, and describe these things with the same relentless power of truth and penetration that characterises the finest works of those writers whom we regard as the classics of Soviet literature: Gorky, Mayakosvsky, Aleksey Tolstoy, Fadeyev, Sholokhov; and perhaps even surpass them.

At the present time, we are engaged on a whole series of frank and vigorous discussions on literature, on painting, and on the writing of history. All these discussions are directed towards liberating our literature and our art, as well as our historical science, from dogmatism, to which the cult of personality was indissolubly tied, so as to eliminate all that is lifeless and false, and clear away the dust that has darkened the horizon.

Historical circumstances so dictated that, for a certain period of time, Soviet literature was obliged to exist under the unfavourable conditions of the Stalin cult. It cannot be doubted that it thereby suffered serious harm. But not for nothing is Soviet literature a people's literature. And just as the socialist development of our whole way of life was not brought to a halt in the period of the Stalin cult, so Soviet literature could not be halted in its socialist development. . . . Many voices were muffled or fell silent for ever, and now it is with deep emotion that we have been experiencing the return of many names and many works to the ranks of Soviet literature. . . .

But one must also understand that, to a considerable extent, writers were perfectly sincere and had no *arrière pensée* in introducing these ideas, since Stalin was for them the personification of the people and of a lofty ideal. This fact imbued the errors of many writers with a significance far removed from any form of servility, and saved them from artistic bankruptcy. Naturally, there were also many others who saw a positive advantage in the expansion of the cult of personality, and this was particularly the case among our portrait painters.

The most widespread phenomenon was a shallow and superficial representation of Soviet reality, which ignored its complexity, failed to deal with many of its aspects, and remained, in short, two-dimensional. Such works were not given the appraisal they merited by the critics. But the strength of Soviet literature is not to be measured by such productions. That strength is to be found in works that struck a new note, such as Aleksandr Tvardovsky's poetic cycle *In the Furthest Distance*, or the early stories of Sergey Antonov, or the last journals of Mikhail Prishvin and many other achievements of socialist realism, which made themselves felt even in those difficult years for our country and our literature when the cult of Stalin held sway. . . .

3. The concept of "the thaw," which you yourself use and which has been widely employed in Western European newspapers, has not found favour, and never will, in the Soviet press. There is no basis for taking the title of a story (which, in my view, was a creative failure by an otherwise excellent writer) as a symbol for the deep and far-reaching changes which have taken place in the Soviet Union following the abandonment of the Stalin cult, and one need not go to the weather reports for terms adequate to express those changes.

Great events demand great concepts and images, which literature has not yet provided, and which will not be provided in any sensational form. A great deal is being printed at the present moment, and many new reviews have been created to satisfy existing demands, but this stream has not yet attained its full dimensions and its turbulent current has not yet produced those great works that are bound to appear in the long run. We are waiting for them.

In our literature, which by its very nature is closely bound up with the life of our society, reigns an awareness that new possibilities have now effectively emerged, and that after a difficult period, literature itself must take a decisive step forward. Today as never before, there is a powerful striving in our literature to get down to the roots of its great traditions, to draw strength from them and to develop all their concealed potentialities, so that in its every word our literature will be alive, forthright, authoritative, and worthy of its great purpose.

These are merely promises? True: but you, as a writer, must know that the shifts and changes that make up an epoch in literature cannot be measured merely by calendar dates.

The concluding phrase of your question is clearly the result of misinformation. There can be no other country in which so many translations from foreign languages are published. You do not like figures, and I will not go into them here, although they give clear proof. If we publish what we please, that is our right, and in any case, we do not only publish "anti-American pamphlets" (perhaps you include in this category the collected works of Theodore Dreiser, which appeared here before they did in America?), but an enormous stream of contemporary literature from every country in the world. As for your desire to see us publish the works of "the independent Left," to that we have no objection in principle; all that is needed is for you to provide the names and titles, and I hope that the Soviet publishing houses will follow your

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advice, if the works in question are of good quality and interesting to our readers.

4. The authors and books which you mention are unfortunately unknown to me, and I could only talk about them when I had got to know them. But I am grateful in advance for your offer to send me the books referred to in your fourth question.

5. You talk of Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia. . . . I shall begin my reply by dealing with the last-named. Our political relations with Yugoslavia have been regularised to the satisfaction of both parties, although there are still a few controversial matters outstanding on which discussions are now in progress. Our literary relations have become much more frank and intimate, although Soviet and Yugoslavia writers do not see eye to eye on everything.

Our relations with Poland, following the recent talks between the political leaders of our two countries, have become particularly cordial. A whole accumulation of misunderstandings has been cleared up. Literary activities in Poland are at present concentrated on an extremely vigorous criticism of the "ten-year plan," with which many of us are not in agreement, as we consider that, together with those aspects that deserve to be condemned, there were many others of great value, that it is not so easy to create afresh, and that dogmatism and bureaucratic excesses in the writers' organisations could not, and cannot, halt truly socialist endeavours in literature. Polish newspapers and reviews enjoy a wide circulation in the Soviet Union, so that there has been a lively reaction here to Polish literary discussions, and it is not by chance that our own reviews and newspapers have added their critical voice to these discussions. It seems to us that our Polish friends still have much to reconsider and think hard on before the truth is revealed to them.

It would seem premature at present to draw any conclusions as to the short- or long-term prospects for the new Polish literature. At all events, we nourish the friendly hope that Polish literature may thrive and flourish. And it seems to us that if it is to become the voice of its own socialist homeland, this fact alone will inevitably show it the right path to take. As for socialist realism, against which so many rash and unjust accusations have been levelled in Poland recently, the future will show who is right and who is most far-sighted.

As for ourselves, we always were and always will be on the side of socialist realism, because, in our view, everything new and bold and forward-looking that the socialist epoch has introduced into literature is concentrated in this concept. And we should like to emphasise that the concept of socialist realism is one of universal synthesis, a concept that is able to unite in one rich spectrum such different writers as Gorky, Mayakovsky, Sholokhov, Tvardovsky, Fadeyev, Prishvin, Maria Puimanova, Aragon, Bronevsky, Eluard, Nezval, and Pablo Neruda. We believe that the bringing together of the socialist conception of the world with that movement of the masses that tends towards the victory of socialism will create the basis for a literature and a new degree of artistic development such as mankind has never yet known. . . . To the schematic-minded, this new literature rooted in the people seems a threat to the hidden mysteries of creation. But surely these are fables only fit for babes and sucklings, since a powerful literature of socialist realism is already in existence, and to the names mentioned above one could add many others no less eminent.

Now, finally, to deal with Hungary, in whose literary life, unfortunately, I have taken less interest, through not knowing the language, and because the historical links which exist, for example, between the Slavonic literatures, have in this case been nothing like so close. Now, when we turn back and take a closer look at what was happening in Hungarian literature in the months before December, it becomes apparent that many Hungarian writers had lost their heads and were prepared to throw overboard, together with the errors of Rakosi, the whole socialist reorganisation of Hungary. It was precisely these writers that reaction put to its own uses. It was just these states of mind that became inflamed in the Petöfi Club, in the writers' organisations, and in their review *Irodalmi ujsag*.

Now, after Hungary has just gone through such a terrible upheaval, it is too soon to say what prospects for further development confront her literature and which writers will take up this or that position. But one thing is clear: literature in a socialist country can only be a literature of the people, for its links with the people are its vital arteries, and if it severs these, it condemns itself to death.

In conclusion, Signor Silone, I should like to pose a few questions myself:

What do you think of the situation of literature in the present-day world, and particularly, of course, in Italy? What is your attitude towards those manifestations of literature which openly ally themselves to the struggle of the working class for the socialist reconstruction of the world? How do you regard the incontestable fact that this literature is developing ever more vigorously at the present time? What is your attitude to the struggle between the two basic currents in contemporary literature—for and against socialism? In relation to these questions, it would be interesting to know what place you attribute to that "independent Left" of which you have spoken in your questions, and what are the prospects for its future.

I should be most grateful to have your answer.

I. Anissimov

(*Translated from the Russian by Erik de Mauny*)

II. SIGNOR SILONE'S REPLY

The questions I asked you in Zürich last September, Ivan Anissimov, have, I think, retained their interest and topicality despite your delay in answering them. The situation of writers, and indeed of anyone engaged in intellectual activity in the Soviet Union, seems to have been getting worse rather than better, a fact unfortunately borne out by some of your own remarks. But our agreement stands and, as you will see, our magazine *Tempo Presente* is publishing your letter in full. . . . May I ask you again whether the full

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text of our letters will appear (as we originally agreed) in your magazine *Inostrannaya Literatura*? Frankly, I cannot see how you could justify a refusal, since there is nothing private about the questions we are discussing, and they will undoubtedly interest your readers quite as much as ours.

You begin with a clear statement of your attitude to the recent events in Hungary, and for this I should like to thank you. However, I was already familiar with it, since it coincides exactly with the attitude of your government. The subject of Hungary was of course not included in the questions I asked you last September, but you correctly surmised that any discussion between us, now and for a long time to come, must inevitably take it into account. Admittedly the subject is a difficult one for us, and it is unlikely that we shall be able to speak of it with serenity or detachment; but this is a case in which polemics, however harsh, is better than hypocritical reticence.

I must tell you straight away that when I came to the part of your letter dealing with the recent Hungarian insurrection and found you simply repeating the scandalous thesis of your government, I was filled with indignation and disgust; and I hope you will do me the honour of taking these words literally. You dare to reproach Jean-Paul Sartre for an attitude which in our opinion does him the highest honour. At the cost of retracting the opinions he had constantly propounded in recent years, Sartre on this decisive occasion showed that he preferred truth to infallibility.

But you have been misinformed if you think he is the only one of the so-called "progressives" to have had a change of heart. . . . All reputable exponents of so-called Left-wing culture and literature, however divergent they may be in taste and ideas, have on this occasion found themselves united in taking sides openly with the Hungarian insurgents and condemning Russian military intervention. (I refer, of course, to those who live in countries where information about the events in Hungary is freely available). It would be not only outrageous but also foolish for you belatedly to impugn the sincerity and disinterestedness of so large and distinguished a group of writers, many of whom, as "peace partisans," were until a short time ago the recipients of your flattery. . . .

The Communist press has familiarised us in every painful detail with your government's trumped-up version of the events in Hungary, and we are in a position to confute it. You, on the other hand, lack the authentic data, indispensable for forming a sound critical judgment, that has been issued by the Hungarian Writers' Union and the Workers' Revolutionary Committees. Your obstinancy in harping on a "Fascist plot" merely shows that you are ignorant of the real mainsprings of this great revolt, the revolt of an entire nation. You are unaware that something extraordinary has taken place, something which endows the profession of letters with new lustre and glory. Rejecting in disgust a Marxism that had degenerated into an ideology of starvation and dictatorship, the people of Hungary found in their novelists, dramatists, and poets the strength and the will to fight for their freedom.

Everyone knows, although you are unaware of it, that the heart of the revolt was not the archbishopric, but the university and the Czepel factory, and that the regular army supplied the insurgents with weapons and munitions. . . . There are, however, certain unimpeachable witnesses whom you cannot possibly ignore—witnesses from your own ranks. You cannot ignore what Communists like Peter Fryer, the *Daily Worker* correspondent, or Giorgio Bontempi, correspondent of the Roman daily *Il Paese*, or the correspondent of the weekly *Vie Nuove* (to mention only the cases I have come across), have testified about the origin and nature of the Hungarian revolt. At the very least, you should acquaint yourself with the eye-witness accounts of Polish Communist writers who happened to be in Budapest at the time. The courageous reports which the Polish Communists Antoni Slonimski, Jan Kott, Adam Schaff, and Vladislaw Bienkovski have given of the events in Hungary would alone suffice, even in the absence of any other proofs, to demonstrate the falsity of your government's predigested version.

Vast sectors of the Communist parties and trade unions of the West are now in a state of profound moral uneasiness because they know the truth about Hungary. There is good reason to believe that the repercussions of Budapest are going to be felt for a long time to come. Ultimately they may even prove to be deeper, more important and more regenerating than those of the Spanish Civil War. For the Spanish Civil War merely sharpened the cleavage between Right and Left, whereas the Hungarian insurrection, by bringing back to the mainstream of freedom a number of forces which had previously been captives of Communism, may yet give birth to a new Left. . . .

Some Russian writers have shown a zeal of which, I hope, they will one day repent: thirty-six of them signed an open letter to a group of French writers, defending the falsehoods of the Soviet government. Their message appeared in a number of French newspapers, by no means all of them Communist; but the French reply has never been published in Russia, and some of the people to whom it was addressed are still unaware of its existence. Your notion of dialogue is somewhat peculiar. . . .

I ASKED you the five questions chiefly with the hope of bringing our conversation round to certain important facts—facts of universal interest—concerning your recent literary history. But in your discussion of the period I referred to, you have achieved the feat of not once letting the name of Zhdanov escape your pen. Surely you are not going to deny that he wielded a certain influence on Soviet arts and letters throughout those dark years? Indeed, for us writers he was in some ways more important than Stalin. He was the Grand Inquisitor, whose special task it was to stifle the creative spirit.

Let me ask you without further preamble: since even you yourselves now admit that period to be over and done with, may we at last be allowed to know the truth—the whole truth—about what happened, in the course of those years, to Russian art, literature, theatre, and historiography? I have no wish to indulge in psychological considerations or

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moralistic reflections on the "government writers" who were immoderately eager to be subservient, nor on those who, to quote Simonov, "swam with the current"; it is the *others* that interest me. . . . You know better than I do that, about 1932, most Russian writers of some repute in your country fell victims to a reign of terror. Even today we cannot, in many cases, be certain as to whether they were brought to trial, executed, deported, or simply forbidden to write, and thereby condemned to starvation. Would it not now be possible for the Soviet Writers' Union to sponsor a thoroughgoing inquiry into that vast holocaust of eminent men? We have almost all the facts about the politicians and generals who succumbed in the same "purges"; why should the fate of the writers and artists still be shrouded in darkness? Any information we have about them (by "we" I mean all of us outside Russia) is fragmentary, vague, and unreliable. For example, you mention Gorky; but don't you think, just for a start, that it is time something was done to clear up the mystery of his death? According to the prosecution and to official admissions made at a trial in March 1938, Gorky was poisoned by the political police. Has there ever been a revision of that trial? Was Gorky really poisoned? How can such a doubt be allowed to go unresolved? What explanation of his death do you give to young Russians who wish to study the last great writer of the older generation? Fadeyev's suicide served recently to remind us of all the other Soviet writers before him who took their own lives: Majakovsky, Essenin, Vladimir Piast, Andrei Sobol, Kuznietsov, Marina Tsetayeva; but the terrible circumstances of some of these suicides have never been revealed.

According to Ilya Ehrenburg, it is certain that Boris Pilniak was shot and that Isaac Babel died in a concentration camp. Some writers who had mysteriously disappeared—Kirshon, Yasenski, Koltsov, Tretyakov—have now, according to recent reports, been posthumously rehabilitated. Shall I speak of the others—of the long line of Jewish writers condemned and executed on the grotesque charge of "cosmopolitanism"? I have only a few names: D. Bergelson, Perez Markisc, Itzik Feffer, Der Nistar, Moshe Kolbak. What happened to the rest? Some time ago I came across a horrifying article by Bernard Turner, published in the Tel-Aviv journal *Di Goldene Keyt* and entitled "With the Jewish Writers in Siberia." Among other things the author explicitly accuses Ehrenburg of having informed against his colleagues.

Then there are all the writers whom we vaguely knew to be still alive despite their enforced silence. We were greatly relieved to learn that some of them (Anna Akhmatova, Boris Pasternak, Michail Zoshenko, Yuri Olesha, N. Erdman) have been heard of again recently; but whether or not they are being allowed to publish their books is as yet by no means clear.

There were still others. What has been the fate of your colleagues, the literary critics Leopold Averbach, Gorbatyov, Lelevitch, Lesenev? What has happened to the historians of Marxism, V. Nevski, D. Riazanov, N. Popov, A. Anichev, S. Piontkovski, Friedland, Zeidel? What kind of death was inflicted on the dramatists Meierold, Liadov, Arakadin, Rafalsky, Auraglobali, Nathalie Salz? And there are many more, all of them vanished without leaving a trace beyond their old, out-of-print stories and essays: Ossip Mandelstam, Ivan Katajev, Alexander Voronsky, A. Voloshin, N. Kluyev, A. Vesjoly, Tarasov-Rodjonov, P. Romanov, G. Serebrjakova, M. Oksman, D. S. Mirsky, Mikitenko.

There is no point in continuing, in further subjecting our readers to this monotonous litany of the dead, of names lined up on the page, one beside the other, like rows of identical crosses in a war cemetery. But you know perfectly well, Ivan Anissimov, that they were not mass-produced men. They were writers, artists, thinkers, full of life and intelligence, some of them brilliantly talented; and they were cut off in the full flowering of their gifts, each in himself a world of sensibility and imagination, an unrepeatable cosmos.

Is anything being done to collect at least what is left of them—other people's memories of them, tangible relics of their work, notebooks? Could not a fund be set up for this purpose, to which writers all over the world might contribute? If in a country where the expression of public opinion is unrestricted a single poet were to be shot for his ideas, public indignation would tear up the paving-stones and the asphalt. . . .

THE GENERAL tone of your letter is that of a man living with perfect peace of mind in a stable and safe society. How is this possible? I am inclined to look for the explanation in the passage where you deny that there exists in your country any such thing as the "thaw." If you mean that there was never any Party edict commanding or authorising the "thaw," you are of course quite right; but I would have no difficulty in proving that it was your own propagandists who spread that illusory catchword in the West, and that it was accepted, guaranteed, and extolled by your "progressive" friends. We accepted it, too, because it gladdened us, and because this meteorological image seemed the most appropriate one to describe an improvement in the political and cultural climate of a country where no public opinion exists. And though you may reject the words "thaw" and "de-Stalinisation," the importance you attribute to certain recent literary developments in the Soviet Union proves that you admit, at least in part, the condition which these terms serve to indicate. To speak only of matters directly relevant to our conversation, it is quite certain that in the last three years your writers and dramatists have been allowed to stray a considerable distance from the once obligatory optimism, alluding a little more freely, for instance, to the misdeeds of the bureaucracy and the cynicism and indifference of the younger generation.

All this, alas, was only a fleeting spring. In recent months, and more particularly in recent weeks, these tender shoots of artistic freedom seem to have been blasted by a new spell of Siberian cold. Thus, when Simonov wrote an article asking that socialist realism no longer be prescribed as an obligatory method for writers, but merely recommended as a subsidiary technique, he was officially reprimanded

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and called to order. There must have been a good reason for the fact that Molotov, after his removal from the government for being too openly compromised by the policies of the past, was summoned to take the place of the infamous Zhdanov at the head of all your cultural activities. . . .

We did not have to wait long for the results. Dudintzev's novel *Not by Bread Alone*, despite an enthusiastic reception by readers, was immediately condemned; then came Granin's turn for his story *An Opinion of One's Own*, Evtushenko's for his poem *The Others*, and Kirsanov's for his poem *The Seven Days of the Week*.

But perhaps it is not altogether correct to speak of a return to Zhdanovism, since in some respects—essential ones for judging the degree of civilisation of any régime—you never, practically speaking, abandoned it. I am referring to anti-Semitism and, in particular, to the persecution of Jewish intellectuals, of their language, press, literature, and drama. We learned most of the details about the continuing persecution of Jewish culture in Russia from a source which can hardly be suspect to you: the report of a British Communist delegation which appeared in the official Party weekly *World News* on January 12th, 1957.

"The first piece of concrete information," one reads in this report, "came from a visit to the Lenin State Library. . . . It turned out that there is nothing in Yiddish later than 1948, when publication of Yiddish papers and journals must therefore have ceased. The Soviet Encyclopedia, which in its 1932 edition devoted about 160 columns to the Jews, reduces this in the 1952 edition to four columns. The biographies of many eminent Jews had been removed. Marx was no longer referred to as a Jew. . . . *Heimland*, a Yiddish journal, was in the library up to the volumes of 1948 and no later. The collected works of Halkin and Vergelis, Jewish poets still alive, were there up to 1948."

The British Communists were anxious to meet some of the Jewish writers who were reported to be still at liberty. "Official requests to this end were made," says the report. This procedure, in reactionary Western countries, is required only of those wishing to visit prisoners in gaol.

How were their official requests received? "We were informed," the report continues, "that this was not possible, as they were all on holiday, while Halkin, who was at home, was too ill to receive anyone. This latter fact at least was checked and found to be true." However, the members of the delegation finally managed through their own efforts to find some Jews who were neither on holiday nor dying. "Then came the discovery," the report continues, "from private conversations by Comrade [Hyman] Levy with Jews, that the years 1948–52 were known among them as 'the Black Years,' the period during which many Jews were dismissed from their posts, Jewish poets and writers were arrested and charged with treason and executed."

Perhaps for the first time in the history of Russia, the population did not appear to share the official anti-Semitism. "Many sections of the Soviet working class," the report notes, "went out of their way to show sympathy and support for harassed Jewry."

Did the persecution stop after Stalin's death? Yes, says the report; and something has been done to rehabilitate the memory of certain writers who had been executed. But the forced assimilation of Jews continues, and to ensure its success they are denied all possibility of cultural expression. Jewish writers and poets are forbidden to use their language, a fact which explains the absence in libraries of anything published in Yiddish after 1948. The world-famous Jewish theatre is still closed down.

The persecution of Jews in Russia has been further confirmed by another equally unimpeachable source, I. B. Salzberg, an important member of the Canadian Communist Party. Salzberg went to Russia last year on a Party mission, and had a two-hour conversation with Krushchev on the subject of anti-Semitic persecution. Far from denying it, Krushchev went so far as to defend it, using the obsessive argument that Jews could not be counted on in case of war. You yourself may perhaps realise that throughout history, the barbarous notion of "objective" or potential danger has been at the origin of every massacre of innocents.

YOU WERE kind enough to ask my opinion as to which independent Left-wing foreign writers, hitherto unavailable in Russian, would be worth translating. Let me begin by saying that I am well aware of the enormous number of translations, from every conceivable language, that are being done in Russia. The fact remains that, whenever we happen to talk to a Russian belonging to the new orthodoxy, we almost invariably get the impression that however much he may know about the rest of the world, he does not know the essential things.

This is not primarily due to political or ideological differences. Between Russian intellectuals and Western Marxists the difficulties of communication, on anything but the most superficial level, are no less apparent. The reason for this lack of mutual understanding is perfectly clear. In capitalist countries, Marxism is still an opposition theory, a heresy. In Russia it is just the contrary—a government ideology, a law. Being aware of this, you Russians confine yourselves to translating only those parts of Western Marxist literature that serve your ends, and you reject the rest, the living ferments that might cast doubt on the historical inevitability of the forms which power assumed in Russia after the Revolution. You also allow yourselves the harmless luxury of translating into Russian a great many reactionary books, to which you then can point as proof of your tolerance. But you have not yet dared to translate most of the works of Georg Lukacs, nor the critical and philosophical writings of Antonio Gramsci—to mention only two outstanding Marxist examples.

My attention has been drawn to the following sentence, in the December number of your journal *Inostrannaya Literatura*, which confirms what I have just been saying: "It may seem paradoxical, but the plays of Brecht are not performed in the U.S.S.R." It may seem paradoxical to you, but not to us. Think of the virulence of certain scenes in Brecht, and the dangerous enthusiasm they would

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be likely to arouse in a Soviet audience. There are even more important reasons for fearing that your frontiers will continue to remain closed to the most significant works of the Left-wing independents as long as you have a totalitarian state. You can, of course—or at least you could—translate chapters, essays, and selections from the books of Bernanos, Camus, Sartre, Orwell, or Simone Weil (I give you this heterogeneous assortment of names to illustrate the manifold expressions which independent criticism of society can assume in the West), but not a single text that would really convey the significance of the work of any one of them. There can be only one explanation for this reluctance of yours. To admit that there can be more than one way of criticising bourgeois society, more than one way of envisaging a different social order, would drain your political monopoly of all moral justification, leaving it only the claims of force and the *fait accompli*. In this way, however, you are reducing the world of ideas to a schematic abstraction. The vaunted range of your translations is mere window-dressing. . . .

In view of all this, you will scarcely expect me to give you a specific list of authors to translate. Your own students, I am convinced, would make a better choice than anybody, if only they had free access to the original editions of the books at present forbidden, and if foreign cultural periodicals were to be found in your bookshop windows and library reading-rooms as easily as your own publications are available in the West.

IT ONLY remains for me to answer the personal questions which you ask me at the end of your letter. I have already written professions of faith on several occasions, and I must confess I consider them a distasteful form of literature. So I shall be brief.

A writer expresses himself in his books. He at least is certain to be judged, not by his faith but by his works. However, since I can hardly expect you to have read mine, I shall merely say that I have been a socialist since my youth and a realist from the time I began to write, and that consequently I abhor what you call "socialist realism." In my opinion, your "socialist realism" usurps the name; "state realism" would be a more "realistic" term, and would render its true meaning more accurately. How else can one define an æsthetic canon which demands from the writer and the artist an optimistic picture of a society where human beings are so oppressed and terrorised? There exists to my knowledge only one work by a Russian author that might, at a pinch, be catalogued under the heading of "socialist realism"—the secret report of Krushchev; but it was the Americans who published it, and moreover there are rumours that the author now intends to disclaim it.

Your political régime is totally incompatible with any realistic representation of society. Realism presupposes freedom of critical vision, and socialism presupposes a choice, which used to be simply between poor and rich, and now tends increasingly to be between the oppressed multitude and the interest of the State. Irrespective of this, no commitment to society can ever exempt the writer from the demands of professional integrity. These consist, quite simply, in an honest use of the intellect. I think that perhaps my chief merit, both as a socialist and as a writer, is to have refuted in practice the assertion with which you constantly terrorise a number of perfectly honourable people: namely, that anyone who leaves the Communist Party must inevitably end up a Fascist.

I equally reject all the other theories of inevitability inherent in your "vulgar Marxist" way of thinking. It no longer requires much perspicacity to recognise the inescapable influence of society on every form of human expression; but to divide literature, or art or science, into two camps, capitalist and proletarian, is sheer stupidity. This subdivision is false in that it identifies the writer's working and living conditions with his inspiration; furthermore, it is reactionary, in that it provides weak characters with convenient alibis for their passivity and irresponsibility. Whereas, after the events in Hungary, it is more important than ever that writers be recalled to a sense of the nobility and responsibility of their profession.

IGNAZIO SILONE

(*Translated from the Italian by Darina Silone*)

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LETTERS

M. CAMUS AND ALGERIA

IN THE April ENCOUNTER, M. Albert Camus is translated as saying, ". . . in certain exceptional circumstances (the Spanish War, the Hitlerian persecution and camps, the Stalinian trials and camps, the Hungarian revolt) he [the intellectual] should permit no ambiguity about which side he has chosen. He should refuse above all to dilute the effectiveness of his choice by shrewd hair-splitting or prudent reservations and should leave no doubt as to his personal intention to defend freedom." Following these admirable precepts himself, will M. Camus please state plainly his position in respect of the French campaign in Algeria, or doesn't he consider it "exceptional"? I don't think I would be expressing an eccentric opinion if I said that the Algerian issue was crucial to the indifference displayed by Asian and African countries to the tragedy of Hungary. If M. Camus had left us in "no doubt as to his personal intention to defend freedom" in this instance, it might be easier to accept his strictures on the lamentable failure of the Bandoeng powers to try and do something to help the Hungarian people. M. Nehru wasn't so far from the unpleasant truth when he said he was unable to distinguish between the plight of Hungary and that of Algeria. Will M. Camus give us his answer?

PETER L. CARACCIOLO

London, N.5

[*M. Camus replies:*

Mr. Caracciolo's letter argues *ad hominem*, and puts me in the deplorable position of having to speak about myself. He seems to be unaware of the fact that I have written articles on the Algerian question over the past twenty years, often enough in vain, in order to call the attention of French opinion to this matter. A series of articles that appeared a year ago in *l'Express* (where M. Caracciolo can consult them) defines my position. I have more recently proposed a series of measures which, for the benefit of Mr. Caracciolo, I shall summarise:

—Proclamation of the end of colonial status for Algeria.

—A round-table conference, without any preconditions, that would include all the representatives of Algerian parties and groups (an idea approved by numerous trades unions and —more important—by the National Algerian Movement).

—Discussion of the possibility of an autonomous, federated (on the Swiss style) Algeria, which would preserve the liberties of the two peoples who inhabit the country.

I trust that these propositions, offered by an Algerian Frenchman, will acquit me in the eyes of your correspondent. If not, I can only excuse myself for not going further. As a Frenchman, I cannot enlist in the ranks of the Arab guerillas. As an Algerian Frenchman, I cannot approve of a terrorism which, moreover, strikes many more Arab civilians than French. One cannot ask me to protest against a particular repression, which I have done, and to justify a particular terrorism, which I shall never do.

Finally, any effort to assimilate the Algerian question to the Hungarian comes up against a historical fact—a fact one may regret but which is a fact nevertheless. There was not in Hungary, installed for more than a century, more than a million Russians (of whom 80 per cent are ordinary folk) whose lives, whose rights (and not merely privileges) the Hungarian revolution menaced. The Hungarian problem is simple: the Hungarians must be given back their liberty. The Algerian problem is different: there, it is necessary to assure the liberties of the two peoples of the country. There is also another difference that M. Caracciolo does not seem to perceive: not a single Russian voice has been raised to demand justice for the Hungarian people. Many French voices have for a long time now been raised in support of the Algerian Moslems. These are the advantages of freedom.

ALBERT CAMUS]

"MUTATION MORALITY"

I HAVE read with great interest and appreciation your article, "Mutation Morality," in the February 1957 issue of ENCOUNTER. Let me say at once that it seems to me that this is an absolutely first-rate job.

Towards the top of the right-hand column on page 37 there occurs a passage which I would like to clarify somewhat. From the organisation of the National Academy of Sciences Study of the Biological Effects of Atomic Radiations through the issuing of the reports in June, 1956, I was the Chairman of the committee on the genetic effects of atomic radiations. Let me summarise briefly the facts concerning the last-minute alteration in the report of our Committee of the estimate of the thirty-year dose from fall-out.

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The President of the National Academy called a press conference in Washington on June 12th. All of the various committees had something of a struggle to complete their reports in time so that they could be reproduced and made available to the sixty or seventy representatives of the press on that day.

Now the Genetics Committee, early in its study, obtained the expert services of Dr. John S. Laughlin, Chief of the Division of Physics and Biophysics at the Sloan-Kettering Institute, New York City, and of a second very well trained nuclear physicist, Dr. Ira Pullman, and asked them to carry out a study of the physical factors relevant to our biological problem. In particular, these two physicists were responsible for producing, for our Committee, the best possible estimate of the fall-out dose.

During the months preceding the release of the report these two physicists were given complete access to the then knowledge in the New York Operations Office of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission concerning fall-out. At that time only "hand calculations" were available. I am sure that you will understand that fall-out is a quantity which is inherently variable from place to place and from time to time. And to achieve a meaningful average result, one has to take into account distribution of population as well as distribution of fall-out. The figure of 0·25 röntgen was the tentative figure which had been produced by these hand calculations. All of these data, however, were in the process of being put on to punched cards, and high-speed mechanical sorting and computing of these data had begun.

On the day before the Washington press conference a revised figure of 0·1 röntgen became available. The AEC scientists were most co-operative in getting that figure to us as promptly as possible. A correction slip was rapidly reproduced, and it was actually pasted into the copies of the report during an hour or two which preceded the press conference.

However, it turned out that certain copies of the report had been put into the mail the day before the press conference. This included about 300 copies which were sent abroad, and it also included certain copies sent to important newspapers such as *The New York Times*.

I think you will thus understand why it turned out that *The New York Times* published the preliminary estimate, whereas the journalists at the press conference received copies with the pasted-in revised estimate.

What I wish to emphasise most strongly is that our Committee received, throughout this study, the most complete and cordial co-operation of the AEC personnel. There was not the slightest hint of any attempt or wish to affect our conclusions. Nor was there the slightest skulduggery involved in this last-minute change of the fall-out figure.

WARREN WEAVER

New York 20

THE article entitled "Mutation Morality" in the current issue of ENCOUNTER has just come to my notice. As one of the ordinary educated laymen to whom the article is addressed, I should like to make some comments which I should be obliged if you would pass on to the author.

Behind the article appear to be two underlying assumptions, both of which I believe to be false, viz., that mutations can never be beneficial (reference being made only to "damage," "harm," "disease," etc.), and that all hereditary diseases are caused by mutation. Since the first assumption is by far the more important, and also the more dubious, I propose to concentrate on that alone.

According to the modern theory of evolution, so far as I understand it, the human species has arrived on the scene only because of a succession of mutations in the right direction in the genetical make-up of his ape-like ancestors, and can change, as a species, only by further mutations. Furthermore, what is "normal" at one stage of evolution may be produced by mutation at a later stage and vice versa; e.g. colour blindness in man is caused by a mutation, but colour vision must originally have been the mutation and colour blindness the normal, because animals lower than man in the evolutionary scale are colour blind.

In view of this, I fail to see how it is possible to draw an absolute distinction between mutations and the "normal," and to label one always bad and the other always good. Unless we are so complacent as to regard the human species as the last word in evolution, I think we must assume that *some* mutations (only a small percentage because the human body is so elaborate that any random change is likely, though not certain, to be for the worse) are beneficial—that is, if the modern theory is correct. Or do scientists perhaps not really believe in the theories they propound?

Of course, even if we accept that mutations can be good as well as bad, there are still possible arguments against increasing the *rate* at which they are produced. For example, one geneticist (it may have been Muller) has stated that if the mutation rate is raised above the spontaneous or "natural" level, mutations will be produced faster than the species can assimilate them; though how he arrives at this conclusion in the fact of the evidence that human nature has not changed one iota since history was first recorded, I cannot imagine.

However, what is really unforgivable in a journal of your standing, is to publish an apparently authoritative and exhaustive article on the subject of human mutation rate, in which the evolutionary aspect is *not even mentioned*. I cannot think that the intention of the author is to mislead, yet I am sure that his article will have this effect, especially since the education of most of your readers probably has much more of a literary than a scientific flavour.

I should perhaps add that I am not, of course, in favour of the testing of atomic weapons; nor am I in favour of their manufacture. But the case against these weapons does not depend on the merits or demerits of the radiation effect produced by the fall-out (which in any case is considerably less at present than the effect of medical X-rays, as the article shows). As Bertrand Russell has warned us many times, the question is not whether we are going to produce a few more idiot babies, but whether we, as a species, are going to survive at all.

N. W. P. WALLACE

London, N.6

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In his brilliant and informative article in your February number, Mr. Wayland Young suggested that the ethical difference between the use of nuclear and conventional weapons is not quantitive but qualitative; this statement he bases upon genetic effects of radiation upon a posterity that was not concerned in the war.

Certainly, he admits, in any war those suffer who did not cause the war; nevertheless, a people, either by electing or simply by not rejecting its government, is responsible for its country's policies, though upon historical consideration this theory seems hard to justify. An individual's relations with his government are, after all, circumscribed by space and the state of civilisation his country has attained, by surrounding powers and by past history. To take an extreme case: when an innocent country is invaded, it will suffer equally whether it fights or declines "responsibility" for the war.

It is at this point that Mr. Young coyly admits that this is "brutal" but, he magnificently continues, "necessary if we [*sic*] are to establish a hard ground for this qualitative distinction"! It is, in fact, with Mr. Young's brutality that I wish to quarrel: he must either be much more brutal or much less. If a man *is* to be so far identified with his state, why stop at that member of the state who is yet unborn? Or, to borrow Mr. Young's analogy, if a man is to be content to be knocked down by the truck that has previously brought him food, must he not also be content to be knocked down by that which has fed his fellow citizen—or his father?

Or alternatively, of course, Mr. Young can be less brutal, but in this case his "hard ground" is irrevocably softened; either way his present mean is, I think, quite unworkable. The fact is that all wars have an incalculable effect upon posterity (I am an effect of the 1914 war myself) and the effects of other men's wars is a part of each man's glorious heritage. Mr. Young may perhaps argue that the effects of radiation impair a man's capacity for choice, controlling his mind internally as well as altering the environment by which it is circumscribed. Well, yes; but this is perhaps a shade idealistic since the attainment of any kind of freedom, moral or political, has always been an "impossible possibility" and though an impossible possibility is permissible in argument, I do not think it can fairly be invoked in drawing conclusions (which Mr. Young goes on to do). I agree, of course, that war now offers increasingly few compensations for itself, if any, but the problem is essentially the same as it was for anyone contemplating pacifism thirty years ago.

23136171, Gnr. Nicholas Tanburn
B.A.O.R. 23

[*Mr. Young replies:*

I am very glad that things are as Mr. Weaver describes them and not as it was possible to imagine from the silent changing of that figure. Perhaps it's worth saying that I didn't put that paragraph in lightheartedly; I enquired of the National Academy of Sciences through (1) the U.S. Embassy in London, (2) a member of the Genetics Committee of which Mr. Weaver himself was chairman, (3) a British nuclear physicist who was visiting the U.S., and (4) a member of Mr. Adlai Stevenson's staff in the presidential campaign. Through none of these channels could I get an answer which entirely matched the facts of that changed figure, but Mr. Weaver's letter does, and I am glad to acknowledge it.

Mr. Wallace is, of course, right when he points out that mutations, besides doing harm, are also the mechanism by which species evolve. I didn't go into this because I thought an account of evolution itself in a short article would not throw much light on the morality of how we treat a mere hundred generations. I haven't ever seen a numerical estimate of the proportion of beneficial to harmful among new mutations, but geneticists agree that it is negligible. For instance, I quote the report of the World Health Organisation's study group on the genetic effects of radiation (*The Times*, 13/3/57): "The group is agreed that additional mutations produced in man will be harmful to individuals and their descendants. . . . All man-made radiation must be regarded as harmful to man from the genetic point of view."

Mr. Wallace seems to come close to the too widespread attitude: "What are a few extra idiots when set against a possible super-Mozart or super-Einstein?" The point is that on the one hand we have very many predictable idiots, and on the other a minute chance of some unpredictable advance. It doesn't take a super-Einstein to work out that calculation.

Bertrand Russell notwithstanding, it does seem to me that there are two separate questions: are we going to survive as a race? and if we do, are we going to produce more idiot babies? My article was addressed to the second.

Gunner Tanburn has a strong argument, but he weakens it, I think, when he says: "All wars have an incalculable effect on posterity." An atomic war would have the usual incalculable effect, but it would also, and this is what makes it different, have a roughly calculable genetic effect.]

"*PRINCES AND POWERS*"

[*The writer of the following letter was head of the American delegation to the Conference of Negro-African Writers and Artists.*]

Since reading James Baldwin's report in your January issue on the First International Congress of Negro Writers and Artists, I have noted that Davidson Nicol has come to the rescue of the American delegation in your pages. We thank him for his kind words and turn our personal attention to our fellow American.

I cannot agree that Dr. DuBois was successful in undermining our influence at the Congress because he sent a letter of greeting in which he said that he could not attend because he could not procure a passport, and accused us of being "State Department stooges" because we could obtain passports. When Professor Mercer Cook of Howard University replied to Dr. DuBois' communication, the resultant applause from the assembled Congress was almost as great as that which had been heard upon the DuBois statement. I suspect that the Congress dis-

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approved the idea of passport restrictions more than it approved DuBois' advice about socialism as the proper road for colonial peoples. After all, passport restrictions is an old story for Negroes in Africa, and the Congress specifically expressed regret because there were no delegates from the Union of South Africa.

There was, in my estimation, an earnest endeavour on the part of the leadership of the Congress to understand the American point of view. When the American delegation protested in a closed session of the Congress against the Communist and anti-Christian rudeness to Pastor Ekollo, the leadership agreed with our position and offered Pastor Ekollo additional time from a crowded schedule. To say the least, the Pastor made full use of his time in the next public session. When Mercer Cook and I accused Aimé Césaire of trying to tar America with the colonial brush, Césaire was quick to explain what he meant by his allusions. It is interesting to note that since the Congress, M. Césaire has resigned from the French Communist Party in a public Lettre à Maurice Thorez that destroys a common ground between him and W. E. B. DuBois.

Moreover, I cannot agree that my African friends could never understand why I am a Negro. They were pleased to know that Negroes such as I prefer to remain with the Negro group. They contrasted this ruefully with the loss of their own mixed bloods to the larger French and British society. In America, Negroes of mixed ancestry have often had financial and familial resources not available to others. On the whole, therefore, their achievements have been greater than others, and all of these talents and accomplishments have been available to the whole group. Ralph Bunche, Walter White, James Weldon Johnson, and even W. E. B. DuBois, much respected by the Africans, have all as much non-Negro blood as I, and one, Walter White, was fairer.

It is also not true that legally a person like myself would be considered Negro in all of the United States. This is a matter of state law, and there are a sufficient number of states where I could live as white and be legally white. Few Negroes in America now take this mean and craven course. They consider themselves culturally American Negroes. Beyond all of this, one can better identify himself with mankind by being what he is. The problem for me would be no different if I were on the other side of the colour line, for I am for man and the Negro problem is only a symptom of man's basic problem. It is precisely because Ralph Bunche is a Negro that he is so effective in the parliament of man. No one can honestly suspect his motives except an oppressor.

Much of this I explained to my African friends and they understood. One African when discussing the American delegates' colour (we were all lighter than the Africans, for more than eighty-five per cent of American Negroes have non-Negro blood), said, "Yes, they are light, but their hearts are black." And this is true, for culturally we are American Negroes. Moreover, our culture is an important part of the American society.

As James Baldwin says, we are also completely American, and this may be hard for our colonial African friends to comprehend. Our emphasis in this country is upon absolute equality in all things as Americans. If there was any wide area of misunderstanding between the African and the American Negroes, it came from the typical American drive to get on with solving social and political problems. We were less concerned with ideological problems and political posture.

Our attitude toward Dr. DuBois and his toward us was somewhat beyond the comprehension of the Africans. Every American at the Congress was indebted to DuBois, had worked for civil rights under his leadership, and was, in fact, the product of his "better tenth" movement. But we cannot agree with his present political position for us or for Africa. The position of the Congress, which espoused cultural freedom and political freedom from colonialism and all types of foreign domination, is contrary to the DuBois Soviet line. Dr. DuBois has been "off the reservation" before, for example, during the depression. In America, in Negro matters as in others, there is an abundance of leadership. No one man speaks for American Negroes and certainly no one man at all times.

Contrary to what James Baldwin said in his article, it seems to me that Richard Wright made a major contribution to the Congress. He asked the Africans to approach the structuralisation of their new societies from a rational point of view. It was a note that needed to be struck, for the new nationalism, everywhere apparent at the Congress, tended to venerate the past and to look forward to the rebuilding of institutions long discarded. This, I take it, resulted from the need for self-respect in the face of the Western power and accomplishments which had crushed much of the old African societies and their culture. But this is a dangerous tendency that can degenerate into xenophobia and a rejection of that which is good in Western civilisation. As Wright pointed out, the resurgence of the African past can be a trap for the Africans, plunging their societies into the irrationalities of the past. He begged them not to repeat the mistakes of the West, past and present, but to utilise its best, to seize upon the main gift of the Enlightenment—the rational approach to man's institutions, a gift not fully understood or used by the West.

Both the African and the American Negroes came away from the Congress a little less provincial. A beginning has been made toward mutual understanding and help, but, as James Baldwin says, the startling fact revealed to us at the Congress was that the Africans shall need to know more about us and our country. We had assumed that we needed to know more about them and their countries, in spite of the fact that I, Cook, and Bond had all taught most of the British West African leadership.

John A. Davis

Department of Government
The City College, New York City

THE UN-BELOVED COUNTRY

In his article on South Africa, in your February issue, Colin Welch speaks of the "wreckage of the idealism" of the official whose task it is to translate

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and apply the country's policies. Such an official, he says, "will probably maintain that you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs (a dictum which might serve as any idealist's epitaph)." A footnote adds that my book, *You Are Wrong, Father Huddleston*, gives a "fair but unintentional portrait of him. . . ."

In *The Condition of Man*, the noted American writer (and planner), Lewis Mumford, says: "Let us have the courage to question the very notion of ideological purity in the development of any human institution. . . . To survive, the idea must adapt itself to an impure medium, the medium of life." He describes those who do not understand this process as "ideologues." They are people "who cannot bear to look their idea in the face once it has been toughened and tarnished by contact with the actual world." The materialisation of an idea in society, he goes on, is inevitably a betrayal and a fulfilment.

These observations, published in 1946, are particularly relevant today, because all the techniques of the post-war age are proving no better able to build a suitable working environment for ideals than the older ones. Everywhere the facts of the actual world and of human nature continue to intrude, and this has caused widespread bewilderment and frustration. It has also given the ideologue his hey-day. . . . The ideologue is resentful, but instead of seeing the cause of his resentment in the uniquely complex circumstances of our country, he blames those who are trying to shape and control them.

May I suggest to Mr. Welch that what is necessary is an acceptance of the good sense of Mr. Mumford? Then there would be hope of the bitterness and futility evaporating out of the South African controversy and leaving in its place the opportunity for sympathetic and constructive discussion. There is a firm basis for this because the difference of opinion does not concern the worthiness of the ideals themselves but simply the possibility of putting them, untarnished, into operation. What has to be faced in practice is the danger of liberty, left to itself, falling into licence and confusion; of the equality of men being obscured by the differences between them, of the brotherhood of man being mocked by the pride, selfishness, and fear of human nature.

We must build more substantially, and to do so we must build with what in cold fact is given us. Mr. Welch has seen a wreckage of idealism where he should have seen a recognition of reality. There is only one way in which those actually responsible for the welfare of South Africa and its people can discharge their responsibility: it is by finding a meeting place between what should be and what can be. . . .

ALEXANDER STEWARD

London, S.W.15

LETTER FROM A MOSCOW STUDENT

[The following letter was transmitted to "Forum," the distinguished Austrian cultural monthly, whose Editors have in turn sent a copy to us. Its authenticity is vouched for by the editors of Forum. It makes an interesting contrast to the letter of Ivan Anissimov, which appears in our "Discussion" department.]

We could gather from news bulletins emitted by Western radio stations and from a Warsaw radio report, that the news of the occurrences in Moscow's Lomonossov University had also spread to Western countries. However, we ascertained that the actual development and extent of these events were not really appreciated in the West.

November 30th, 1956, was a memorable day for us Russian students—some say a historical day. After Professor B. E. Syrojetschkowitch had gone through the duty performance of reading out extracts about Marxism–Leninism, the usual discussion took place during which a student asked a question of decisive significance—perhaps even the fatal question about our Marxism. First he upheld the incontestable Leninist view that a general strike is the weapon of the proletariat and that under certain historical conditions an economic general strike can turn into a political issue and finally end up in an armed insurrection. When he had referred to this Lenin theory and added that a general strike could never be the weapon of the exploiting class, he was asked how it was possible that in a Socialist country—more specifically in the Peoples' Democracy of Hungary—a general strike had occurred as surely no general strike could take place in a country which had a Communist government comprised of workers and peasants.

In answer to this question Professor Syrojetschkowitch could only quote the daily press. This was inadequate for a University discussion. He began talking about the terror caused by Horthy–Fascist officers and of the diversionary activity of Western imperialists, but his words were drowned by the storm of protest which rose among the students who proved to him by the flood of Lenin-citations, that he had not answered the actual question put to him. Finally, Lenin's classic definition of the task of the "New Type of Party," whose duty it was to take over the demands proclaimed by workers during a general strike and steer them along the right course, was cited. But at this point the discussion turned into rowdy confusion and the Professor preferred to withdraw from the scene.

But soon the incident had spread around to the students' quarters at the back of the university. The discussions went on and late in the evening Hungarian student guests were dragged out of bed and asked to talk of conditions in their home country.

The Hungarians were apparently not used to such open discussions and as a result of the political turn of events which had meanwhile taken place in their own country, they avoided all delicate questions. All the same, the information which they *did* give, provided ample scope for comparisons with conditions existing in the Soviet Union. . . . Gradually a question crystallised which is of the utmost importance in the system of "realised Socialism." Namely: "Hasn't party bureaucracy, although it is not formally entitled to own the means of production of the community, become an exploiting party in the original Marxist sense, through the practical

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control it exercises over the various branches of production, in that it determines the latter's utilisation and controls employment of workers and salaries? And is it not admissible, or even necessary, to apply the old Marxist weapon of class-combat—i.e. the general strike—against *it* too?" That is as far as the discussion went, and it ended without agreement having been reached on the answer.

On the following day hand-written papers appeared on the notice boards of the Komsomol Organisation at Lomonossov University demanding a true report and open discussion on Hungary. The contents of these slips of paper, which had disappeared when lectures began, were passed on from mouth to mouth during the morning. At lunch-time new notices announced a meeting of the Komsomol Committee at which the "shameful events" of the day before were to be discussed. The word "shameful" was crossed out, but the notices remained posted.

Linkow, the Secretary of the Komsomol Organisation, opened the meeting at the Ostrowski Club House by a remark which was bound to provoke the majority of participants. He declared that it was the duty of the Komsomol to avoid a repetition of such academically lowering excesses as had taken place the day before. This remark was followed by renewed "excess." In a speedily improvised vote, "The Hungarian Problem in the Light of Marxism–Leninism" was established as the only item on the agenda and thereby the functionaries were deprived of controlling the free expression of participants. Immediately, the first speaker talked of an "over-bureaucratised machine" which had alienated itself from the masses and therefore tried to remain in power by means of the methods applied by Beria, who had already been unmasked. Here he referred to Hungary, but a comparison with the Soviet Union was evident and was even . . . expressed: "One is bound to wonder whether disregard of the resolutions of the 20th Party Congress could not also evoke such developments over here and whether one of these days our workers, under Lenin's banner, will not rise against their 'bureaucratised' exploiters who have become 'tarred by the middle-class brush.'" When Linkow protested against these anti-Party remarks and finally wanted to prevent the speaker from continuing, he came up against such tremendous resistance from participants that he had to leave the room with his collaborators. However, the discussion continued and several active members of the Komsomol were also drawn into it.

In the evening the discussion was resumed by a group of young writers and students in the "Literature Building." Hungarian events were no longer the main point of discussion, but they were used to illustrate a development for which certain prerequisites existed everywhere, the Soviet Union included. . . . From this there emerged another question—that of class characteristics of the Soviet community. Almost all the participants in the discussion were of the opinion that the official formula, "Alliance of Workers and Peasants with the Intelligentsia under the Leadership of the Working Classes," is not a true description of the situation as it actually exists, and that even in the Soviet Union the difference between the exploiter and the exploited continues to exist. Merely one distinguishing mark of the exploiting class—i.e. the personal property rights to the means of production—had changed. But the present workers' property rights to the means of production only existed "on paper" and the Party's preference for heavy industry, supported by a central administrative system, had also fixed the class character of the Soviet community from the legal point of view; to protect themselves, those who profit by it have created the same class justice as exists in bourgeois society for the protection of the exploiting class.

It was unavoidable that the young writers present also came to speak of freedom of intellectual and artistic creation. Proceeding from the resolutions to combat the personality cult, they condemned Soviet Literature since the thirties as being the product of a propaganda machine which had been influenced by the personality cult led by party secretaries hostile to cultural development. "The Different Ways to Socialism" which were basically approved at the 20th Party Congress were also brought into the discussion. As these "Ways" had already been found by the people of Yugoslavia and Poland and had practically speaking been recognised by the Soviet Union, they should surely also be recognised for the various peoples of the Soviet Union who participated in the structure of Socialism under different conditions.

Here the first sharp differences of opinion arose between students and writers participating in the discussion. The Great Russians among them emphatically rejected the demand that the Ukraine, Baltic States, Central Asia, etc., follow their own Socialist "road," as this would threaten Soviet economic potentials and would have the effect of dissolving the Soviet Union into a series of national states—a thing which was today considered as being historically outlived. It was not the nation itself, but the community structure and closed economic area which controlled a country.

Next day reports were circulated announcing a conference which the Moscow Town Council of the Komsomol had called to discuss the incidents at Lomonossov University. We gathered that the Komsomol leaders had first tried to ascertain whether what had occurred should actually be regarded in a positive or in a negative manner. Artemow, a member of the Moscow Town Council, expressed the view that action should be taken against those demagogues who had gone too far, but that the events themselves should be regarded in a positive manner as their nature was such as may draw the youth movement out of its long-standing state of stagnation. But Artemow did not get his way. The Committee decided to "urge" the rector of Lomonossov University to expel a number of students whose names were to appear on a list which the Committee was to compile. At the same time the secretaries of the University Komsomol were severely reprimanded for "lack of real contact with students and defects in ideological teaching."

On December 3rd the rector in fact expelled a total of 140 students for *"chuliganstvo"* (rowdyism)

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and announced simultaneously that lectures on Marxism–Leninism would cease forthwith until after the New Year's Holiday. It was the first time in the history of Moscow University that the rector had been forced to stop lectures because teachers had been unable to cope with questions which may arise during discussions. The students regarded this as a triumph they had wrested from the Komsomol. Contrary to the expectations of the Komsomol secretaries, who had reckoned with an "abatement of the storm," the discussions continued in clubs and students' quarters.

During these discussions the slogan "Socialist Revolution against the Pseudo-Socialist State" became prominent. Lenin himself had worked on its ideological foundations and had described the methods and tactics of the struggle in great detail. Above all, the Russian students adopt the new slogan because in it they see a possibility to maintain national unity. In opposition to this, students of other nationalities support the thesis that there are "Various Ways to Socialism"—here the traditional disagreement between Great Russians and the other populations becomes very evident.

It appears that it would only be possible for us to conserve Socialism on a permanent basis provided the slogan "Socialist Revolution against the Pseudo-Socialist State" is realised in some way. The formula "Various Ways to Socialism," although coined by contemporary Soviet leaders, seems, on the contrary, to induce a development which could not lead to a Socialist revival, but only to the creation of autonomous, perhaps even sovereign groups, whose national chauvinism is bound to interfere with the homogeneous structure of the country and thus effect the disintegration of its socialist installations.

The significance which the Komsomol attached to the discussions which had taken place in the universities had the remarkable effect of causing such discussions to flame up elsewhere as well. In the middle of December the active members of the Komsomol of the Moscow military zone were forced to meet in order to deal with similar occurrences within the garrisons. The following resolution was passed: "Demagogic elements in the ranks of our youth have broken the frame of internal Party democracy, misused the right to criticise freely, and have directed massive, mainly unjust attacks against local and central Party functionaries, Party leaders, and against the system itself. These attacks, brought about by ultra-revolutionary slogans, have reached a point where they may be described as being reactionary and counter-revolutionary threats."

In the middle of December the news reached us in Moscow that similar incidents had also occurred in Leningrad colleges. Students there, in keeping with the old Leningrad revolutionary tradition, went much further than we had done. At regular intervals they publish a mimeographed students' paper entitled *"GoluboiButon"* ("The Blue Bud") which is controlled neither by the rector nor by the Komsomol and in which questions concerning contemporary Marxism, artistic creation, and subjects related to them are discussed. The fact that no action was taken against the publishers, although the Leningrad Komsomol offices attacked them bitterly, made a great impression in Moscow. The periodical still appears and many of its contributions, which are copied here, supply a basis for fresh discussions.

One of the most recent counter-measures taken against these incidents occurred at the end of December, when Baltic students were forbidden to continue their studies at the Lomonosov University. The reason given was that the Baltic universities had also been reached by the general wave of discussions and that debates were almost exclusively restricted to "Different Ways to Socialism" and thus led to nationalistic, anti-Russian, and bourgeois-separatist ideas.

We know that in Kiev, Kharkov, Sverdlovsk, Novosibirsk, and even in Central Asia (i.e. Tashkent), animated discussions are taking place at the various universities. They culminate in the same alternative as that which had emerged out of the Moscow discussions: either the creation of a true Socialist reality—as a last resort through revolutionary measures—(the main supporters of this theory are the Russians), or the adoption of "Various Ways to Socialism" which is a measure mainly supported by those who are not of Russian nationality, who allege that such a line had already been sanctioned, not only by the resolutions of the 20th Party Congress, but by general practice.

The attitude of the Komsomol and its often all-too-hasty measures impart to individual groups the secure feeling that they do not stand alone and that practically the entire Soviet youth has been drawn into the new wave of discussions. This is undoubtedly one of the most interesting political movements since the death of Stalin. But it is noteworthy that it was not launched by the ruling party, not "from the top," but spontaneously and within the Socialist camp itself. It will presumably also find a solution within the Socialist camp, which, though it can be promoted "from the top" cannot be prevented "from the top."

(Signature Withheld)

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BOOKS

"A Corrupt Brightness"

AN INCREASING amount of attention is being paid to that modern phenomenon known as "mass culture," or, sometimes, "popular culture."* Almost everybody is worried about its increasingly successful competition with serious (or high, or traditional) culture, its steady extension of the frontiers of the vulgar, the corrupt, and the trivial, and its connection with such malign political growths as Hitler's demagogy, the Communists' "people's democracies," and the "Americanisation" of Europe. And almost every one, from contemptuous conservatives through anxious liberals to we-told-you-so Marxists, finds it a tricky subject to write about, since its standards are so low that it tends either to reduce the commentator to its own level or else to drive him to a sterile, academic remoteness. Three recent works, one American and two British, are cases in point.

The American volume† is, naturally, gigantic: 561 big pages containing 49 articles by fifty-one authors about books, magazines, comics, motion pictures, radio, television, music, and advertising, plus seventeen essays on more general aspects. Nothing like it has appeared before, and, by virtue of its sheer scope and inclusiveness, it fills that Long Felt Want that seems to be always waiting to be filled. But it doesn't fill it well. Of the forty-nine articles, twenty-one seemed to me definitely good, eighteen definitely bad, and the rest are borderline cases. This is not a brilliant showing.

The good things are often very good indeed. The half dozen pages from Tocqueville —hardly a *trouvaille*, but let's be grateful they're in, also for a snippet from Ortega's *The Revolt of the Masses*—are as always magisterial. How prescient Tocqueville was, how much more to the point today than his great 19th century competitor, Karl Marx, and how *accurate*! What could be more descriptive of the combination of awe and contempt with which our popular press approaches successful artists and writers: "In democratic times, the public frequently treat authors as kings do their courtiers: they enrich and despise them...." Leo Lowenthal and T. W. Adorno, both from that remarkable group of historians of culture centering around Max Horkheimer's Institute of Social Research, contribute sophisticated and deep-probing studies. (The Horkheimer group shows that even Marxism, in the right hands, is still capable of yielding insights into contemporary society.) Mr. Lowenthal's paper, while perhaps not as rich as Mr. Adorno's, is especially needed today; it deals with "aspects of the historical and theoretical frame of reference which seem to me to be a basic requirement for the study of mass communications and yet a blind spot in contem-

* I think the former term more descriptive, since its distinctive characteristic is not its popularity—Homer, Shakespeare, and Dickens were all popular, after all—but the fact that it is solely and directly an article for mass consumption, like breakfast food. "Mass culture" has invaded the old forms and has also created its own media, such as the cinema, radio, television, and comic strips. It began to flourish about a hundred and fifty years ago, and it differs in kind—regardless of any question of artistic quality—from traditional culture in that it is not the result of individuals communicating their own personal ideas and visions to other individuals but rather is a commodity manufactured by craftsmen for sale on a mass market.

† *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America.* Edited by BERNARD ROSENBERG and DAVID MANNING WHITE. The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill. $6.50.

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porary social science." The lack of interest in the past history of mass culture, and in its theory, which he here suggests are amply demonstrated throughout the rest of the volume. Clement Greenberg's "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" is now almost twenty years old but still, as far as I am aware, the *locus classicus* for the discussion of another important and neglected aspect of mass culture—its relation to, and effect on, high culture.

The above are typical of one kind of good article in the volume—broad, theoretical treatment. Another kind may be represented by the essays by Edmund Wilson and George Orwell on detective stories and by the late Robert Warshow's judicious and sensitively perceptive account of his son's reading of horror comics. These are well-written pieces by writers who know their craft and who give their own intellectual experiences (as against "surveying" part of "the field" via statistical research). There are also some excellent things that don't fall into either of the above categories: Marshall McLuhan's two frenetic but often brilliant articles, Nathan and Martha Leites' original and witty analysis of the "good-bad girl" in Hollywood movies, S. I. Hayakawa's modest sensible little piece contrasting the realism and psychological health of the lyrics of Negro blues songs (which are a form of folk art, quite a different thing from mass culture) with the neurotic escapism of tin-pan-alley popular songs. Cf. "Paper Doll," originally written in 1915 and recently revived:

> I'm going to buy myself a paper doll to call my own,
> A doll that other fellows cannot steal. . . .
> When I come home at night she will be waiting,
> She'll be the truest doll in all the world.
> I'd rather have a paper doll to call my own
> Than a fickle-minded real live girl.

This is mass culture's theme song.

BUT MEDIOCRE, or worse, articles are predominant in the anthology and give it a prevailing flavour of boredom. There are, it seems, at least three bad ways to write about mass culture: the Academic-Cautious, the Academic-Baroque, and the Paleo-Marxist.

The *Academic-Cautious* produces sentences like "Analysis of the contents of the Dick Tracy comic strip suggests that it might appeal to different kinds of readers for different reasons." And articles like "Majority and Minority Americans, an Analysis of Magazine Fiction," whose authors, Bernard Berelson and Patricia J. Salter, after a laborious survey of "198 short stories published in 8 of the country's most widely read magazines in 1937 and 1943," replete with statistical tables and other academic instruments of torture, conclude: "On almost every index—frequency, rôle, delineation, status, goals—*The Americans* received better treatment, both qualitatively and quantitatively, than the minority and foreign groups." Mr. Berelson also, single-handed, produced another article in the volume, "Who Reads What Books and Why?" "The answer is by no means easy to give," it begins, and it ends: "The general moral of this tale, then, is that the state of popular reading is complicated, uneven, shifting and sometimes obscure." In between we learn that American book-readers are mostly "college-educated, better-off, middle-aged people living in a city." The odd thing is that Mr. Berelson, who runs the Ford Foundation's social-research programme ("behavioral science" they call it), struck me when I interviewed him last year as a shrewd and lively fellow. Something happens to Americans when they put on the academic uniform.

Academic-Baroque is a pseudo-scholarly style of writing, highly developed in America—Talcott Parsons, the *doyen* of social science at Harvard, is perhaps its most accomplished practitioner—in which an ornate rhetoric, if the term may be applied to such gracelessness, conceals the absence of thought. Siegfried Kracauer's "National Types as Hollywood Portrays Them" combines the Academic-Cautious (he demonstrates, I think conclusively, that Britons and Russians were treated more sympathetically during the war years than before or after) and the Academic-Baroque: "Any national cinema yields to the impact of subjective influences in portraying foreigners; these portrayals, that is, are strongly determined by such audience desires and political exigencies as currently prevail on the domestic scene." This kind of thing goes on throughout the book, reaching the point of parody in Irving Crespi's "Card Playing in Mass Culture," where an astonishing mastery of the ritual ("The findings of other polls are consistent") enables the author to execute a stately academic pavane without

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his feet ever touching the ground: "It is our contention that, in fact, widespread participation in card-playing is an index of the extent to which the forms of small-group living have been conditioned by the impact of mass society." "Each player has a clearly defined relationship to all the others, a relationship impersonally defined by the rules governing play." "Card-playing mitigates boredom through structured group action. The game also functions to create and discharge feelings of group obligation."

Perhaps the best example of *Paleo-Marxism* is Alan Dutscher's gloomy exposé of the publishing business. Everything is terrible and going to get worse, he announces with evident relish, owing to the inexorable, ineluctable, and inevitable laws of the capitalist market: "Rottenness permeates *every* area of the book field and is the necessary result of the overall system.... Ideology (a category which includes all literature) in so far as it is great can only reflect reality.... When capitalism was still, qualitatively considered, progressive it could afford to be honest with and about itself; when it... became retrogressive the truth became... a menace, and lying or evasion... became the only legitimate forms of literature... etc., etc." Mr. Dutscher actually thinks that publishers automatically reject good manuscripts: "It can be categorically stated that the great majority of good literature that might be published never gets into print in the first place—is stillborn." I would say that since the thirties precisely the opposite has been true: publishers are pathetically eager to publish new, original, experimental writers—and, indeed, practically any manuscript that is half literate —and if anything they should be reproached for exercising too little birth control. There is the usual revolutionary paranoia: he objects that most book-reviewers are "indistinguishable from the writers of advertising copy"—a truism with which I agree—and then feels it necessary to explain why any books at all are unfavourably reviewed: "Given the limitations of the market and the overproduction of books, at least some must be panned so that the others may sell." This assumes a sort of Elders of Zion conspiracy, a secret central committee of publishers that decides what books are to be sacrificed *pour encourager les autres*.... Hortense Powdermaker's "Hollywood and the U.S.A." is another Paleo-

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Marxist exercise ("Hollywood represents totalitarianism," we learn, because it rejects "the democratic concept of man"), as is Gunther Anders' "The Phantom World of TV," which has some imaginative insights but is marred by such nonsensical statements as that the phonograph and the radio "have robbed us of live music performed in our homes" (remember all those string quartets that used to gather around the kitchen tables in Des Moines, Iowa?), and that, since television brings the world to us, we are all passive spectators and "modern man travels only as a last resort" (modern man must indeed be desperate: 500,000 Americans went to Europe in 1955, and 1,500,000 Britons visited the Continent).

"NO OTHER people on earth are such avid readers of newspapers as the British," Francis Williams begins his readable, informative, superficial, and ill-written history of British daily journalism.* Nine out of ten inhabitants of these isles begin their day by reading at least one and sometimes two national morning papers. The per capita consumption of newspapers is twice as great as in the United States and three times as great as in France. All this is matter for awe or for despair, according to one's judgement. Mr. Williams's inclines him to awe; a former newspaper editor himself who writes a shrewd weekly column on Fleet Street in the *New Statesman*, he writes as an insider, for good and for ill—the good being he knows his stuff, the ill that he takes the Press Lords seriously, romanticising them even when he disapproves of them. He has a breathless little vignette of Beaverbrook, "a superb popular newspaper impresario" (which is like saying, "William Wrigley, that brilliant maestro of chewing gum"), apropos whose special device for wasting the public's time our author writes: "Whether one likes the *Express* or not, it is a remarkable paper—one of the most remarkable that British journalism, or the journalism of any country for that matter, has ever known." (Whatever one's taste, Wrigley's is the most brilliantly resilient chewing gum the world has ever known.)

As I remarked in last November's ENCOUNTER, the popular daily press is one department of mass culture in which Britain has far outdistanced the United States in scope, in low quality, and in sheer silliness. Mr. Williams tells the story of the degeneration of British newspapers from the relatively high standards of Victorian and Edwardian times to the mindless vulgarity of today. His attitude is on the whole apologetic: at least Northcliffe and Southwood and Beaverbrook and Mr. Harry Guy Bartholomew (that "rough, tough, erratic, and ruthless genius" whose monument is ... the *Daily Mirror*) Gave the Public What It Wanted, and, while one cannot really exactly precisely personally approve of the result, still it is all very exciting and who are we to sneer at the common man? (I am one to sneer at him, and I don't think he would thank the Friends of the People for the epithet.)

At the turn of the century, the millions who had learned to read as a result of the Elementary Education Act of 1870 began to provide a new, mass public. On May 4th, 1896, the first issue of Northcliffe's *Daily Mail* sold 397,215 copies, more than any newspaper had ever sold in one day. "His [Northcliffe's] sins, if such they were, were of commission, theirs [Spender, Morley, Stead, and the other great Edwardian journalists] of omission," Mr. Williams writes, implying that Northcliffe's "sins" were perhaps not sinful at all. "But their responsibility is hardly smaller. To the challenge of the new popular readership which he so gladly and vigorously accepted these others had nothing to say. They gathered their skirts around them and fled to ivory towers. They cannot but have been aware of the immense opportunity and responsibility presented to journalism by this new reading public. It was their professional business to understand it. But they did nothing about it." This is cant. Northcliffe didn't accept any responsibility; he merely exploited the ignorance and lack of standards of the new reading public in order to sell papers and make money; he negated the possible good effects of the 1870 Education Act as far as he could, and corrupted the common people by appealing to their lowest common denominator; Spender, Stead, et al. perhaps could have shown more enterprise, but they were at an almost impossible competitive disadvantage, since Northcliffe's journalistic goods were much more seductive to uncultivated minds

* *Dangerous Estate: The Anatomy of Newspapers.* By FRANCIS WILLIAMS. Longmans, Green. 24s.

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than were theirs. The trader who offered gin and whiskey to the Indians almost always got the better of his more ethical competitors; but historians don't usually applaud him and sneer at his unsuccessful rivals as ivory-tower escapists. (Though I suppose if we get some good lib-lab scholars working on the history of the American Indian, we will be hearing how the sellers of fire-water gladly and vigorously accepted the challenge presented by this new drinking public.)

To be fair to Mr. Williams, his attitude is shared in other political quarters. At least Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge, whom no one could accuse of lib-labism, saluted the book in the *New Statesman* as a salutary debunking of all this nonsense about journalistic standards. "Mr. Williams," he writes, "rightly dismisses as ignorant and foolish the distinction in kind often made between 'quality' newspapers like *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, and the *Manchester Guardian*, and their popular counterparts like the *Mirror* and the *Express*.... I personally find the idiom of *The Times*, the *Observer*, and the *Guardian* (in that order) decidedly repugnant.... But the Top People who read *The Times*, the Virtuous People who read the *Observer*, the Earnestly Thoughtful People who read the *Guardian*, like, and are perfectly entitled to have, their news so presented. But so are the readers of other newspapers who happen to prefer [this "happen to" formulation is typical of such apologetics, like Molotov's observation, during the Hitler-Stalin Pact, that fascism was a matter of taste] a bathing beauty to a fourth leader, gossip about film stars to a profile of Mr. Nehru, lurid coverage of crimes to editorial exhortations." Virtue and thoughtfulness are thus rather stuffy, while there is something dashing about the amateurs of bathing beauties and lurid crime stories—or, as Mr. Muggeridge puts it: "To me, the prose style of Cassandra (Mr. William Connor) is decidedly more admirable than, for instance, that of Mr. T. S. Eliot."* I think this is going a little too far.

All this is the New Philistinism, strongly tinged with masochism, that, I am told, also infects a group of advanced thinkers centering

* A sentence of Cassandra's super-Eliot prose: "The whole scheme is an invitation to Americans to loot our islands clean with the weight of their dollars."

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in the Institute of Contemporary Arts (with whom Mr. Muggeridge would probably not be caught dead) who admire the movies, science fiction, and other products of American mass culture.*

MUCH THE BEST of the three books here considered—stylistically, in its value judgements, and in the information it contains—is Richard Hoggart's study of British working-class life and the effect on it of mass culture.† Mr. Hoggart is a very serious, very thoughtful, and very conscientious writer. Although all these adjectives have acquired a slightly pejorative flavour—partly because of the mass-cultured, over-journalised age we live in—I think they are good and honourable ones. He writes well and has a nice eye for the telling detail and a nice ear for the colloquial, as in his collection of working-class axioms on sex, which have the real folk pungency and appositeness:

> "A slice off a cut cake is never missed" (on the easy sexual habits of some married women).
>
> "Nay, they don't oppen t'oven for one loaf" (a middle-aged mother to a young wife expecting her first baby, who had said she would be happy to have only one child).
>
> "Y' don't look at the mantelpiece when y' poke the fire" (a woman doesn't need to be pretty to make sexual intercourse with her enjoyable).

The first, and best, part of the book is a detailed description of working-class *mores*, drawn from the author's own boyhood in Leeds in the twenties and thirties. We have had similar descriptions in the States—as the Lynds' classic study of "Middletown"—but they are usually sociological investigations from the outside; the Lynds lived in Middletown a year or so, as anthropologists live a while in a primitive community, observing, questioning, collecting data; it is a valid method, but it inevitably lacks the feeling, the intimate, easy expertise that distinguishes Mr. Hoggart's approach. He thinks it was—to some extent still is—a good life from the human viewpoint, satisfying tolerably well the real needs of those who live it. I agree, but I think he somewhat overestimates its cultural satisfactions. The food (" 'Something tasty' is the key phrase in feeding.... The tastiness is increased by a liberal use of sauces and pickles, notably tomato sauce and piccalilli"), the interior decoration ("Plastic gewgaws and teapots shaped like country cottages ... complicated lace-paper d'oyleys, complicated lace half-curtains, crocheted table-runners, fancy birthday and Christmas cards"), the comic postcards they send back home from the seashore, the club-singing—all this seems to me as much an expression of mass-culture as a folk tradition. The rest of the book deals with the impact of mass-culture, mostly limited to the printed word, on the working-class world Mr. Hoggart grew up in. Although he covers the ground conscientiously, and always with intelligence, I think some American research technique would have helped here; the emphasis at times seems lopsided and the broad outlines don't come through as clearly as they might. However, all through the book there are paragraphs and pages of remarkable insight

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* A few words should be said about the book's prose style, which is surprisingly bad—Mr. Williams writes much better in his *New Statesman* column. There are far too many sentences like: "Building on this foundation they provide an example of the height to which press power can rise such as no subsequent editor or newspaper proprietor has come within hailing distance of." And: "The big advertisers took space in the early first numbers [*what is a late first number?*] of the new *Herald* but very soon made clear their unwillingness to continue doing so on a large enough scale for profit with a net sales figure of only just over a million." Referent trouble is also, as our author might put it, rife: "Cecil Harmsworth King is the son of a distinguished administrator in the Indian Civil Service who later became Professor of Oriental Languages at Trinity College, Dublin, the son-in-law of the Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford, a Wykhamist, an honours graduate in Constitutional History of Christ Church, and a collector of china." Who became the Orientalist, the distinguished administrator or his son? I hazard the father. And who became the Greek Professor's son-in-law? I hazard the son. But I may be wrong—syntax gives no clue. On page 85 we read: "He [Delane of *The Times*] had virtually no private life nor ever seemed to want any; Barnes on the other hand lived in quiet domestic bliss with a mistress." This is immediately followed by a new paragraph beginning: "It was his habit to arrive at Printing House Square at ten o'clock each evening...." This "his" syntactically refers to Barnes, but the context makes it clear (after one has thought about it a little) that it is supposed to refer to Delane. This kind of writing seems to me slovenly by the most modest journalistic standards.

† *The Uses of Literacy*. By RICHARD HOGGART. Chatto & Windus. 25s.

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and speculation. In fact, the first thing that struck me, after ploughing through the American anthology, was how *thoughtful*, literally full of thought, Mr. Hoggart's book is.

The American academic style is to collect the data by impersonal research methods and then to devise a series of rather abstract generalisations that summarise it. The next step, which is simply to think about the material oneself (thought, like love-making, is not a collective activity), is rarely taken. But Mr. Hoggart takes it, as in his ruminations on the camp-followers of the avant-garde, the half-educated who have a yearning for Culture but neither the intellectual equipment nor the will to be serious about it (which involves a good deal of hard work):

> It is my impression that this kind of interest in serious publications is more common than is generally thought. There is often a continuous line from elementary promptings to learn "dynamic speech and writing" to some forms of membership of the "minor intelligentsia".... They used to take *Penguin New Writing* and now subscribe to ENCOUNTER. They know a little, but often only from reviews and short articles about Frazer and Marx; they probably own a copy of the Pelican edition of Freud's *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. They sometimes listen to talks on the Third Programme with titles like, "The Cult of Evil in Contemporary Literature".... They will have heard about the National Council for Civil Liberties and will read the *New Statesman*. They will know the anti-Munnings arguments for modern art, particularly for Picasso. They will know the arguments about the debasing effects of the popular press and the corruption of advertisements. They will find some pleasure in that kind of analysis, a pleasure that can easily become a sort of masochistic nihilism.... They read the reviews more easily than the books which are being reviewed.... They wander in the immensely crowded and often delusive world of ideas like children in their first Fairground House of Thrills—reluctant to leave, anxious to see and understand and respond to all, badly wanting to have a really enjoyable time, but, underneath, frightened.

This kind of perception can never be "statistically verified," being a matter of sensibility working on the writer's own personal observation and presenting his own thinking on the meaning of what he has observed. The virtue

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of it is that, when the writer has really thought about the implications of mass culture —and of course assuming he has in his head the requisite machinery for the task—he can cut much closer to the bone than the most hard-working labourer in the vineyards of communications research. As:

> The strongest objection to the more trivial popular entertainments is not that they prevent their readers from becoming highbrow, but that they make it harder for people with an intellectual bent to become wise in their own way.... The new-style popular publications fail not because they are poor substitutes for *The Times* but because they are only bloodless imitations of what they purport to be, because they are pallid but slicked-up extensions even of 19th-century sensationalism, and a considerable decline from the sinewy sensationalism of Elizabethan sensational writers. They can be accused... not of failing to be highbrow, but of not being truly concrete and personal. The quality of life, the kind of response, the rootedness in a wisdom and maturity which a popular and non-highbrow art can possess may be as valuable in their own ways as those of a highbrow art....
>
> Most mass-entertainments are in the end what D. H. Lawrence described as "anti-life." They are full of a corrupt brightness, of improper appeals and moral evasions.... These productions belong to a vicarious, spectators' world; they offer nothing which can really grip the brain or heart. They assist a gradual drying-up of the more positive, the fuller, the more cooperative kinds of enjoyment, in which one gains much by giving much.

That just about says it, I think.

Dwight Macdonald

VISION BY OBSERVATION

SELF-CRITICISM is probably a healthy sign in society as it is in the individual life; but, when it reaches the point of completely denying any virtue to the self, it verges on the suicidal, and is hardly to be recommended. That our own society can do with a good deal of criticism must be admitted; yet it is surely not as bad as some propagandists would have us believe? Or is it? Has Western man the duty of condemning his civilisation as utterly corrupt? And, if he cannot do this duty, must he catch the next dream-boat in order to escape from the reality around him and the guilt within? These reflections are aroused by a reading of the month's novels. It would almost seem that many of the most talented of British authors are vying with the Russians in an attempt to impose the Soviet myth of a decadent West where all power is in the hands of pansies and nymphomaniacs, effete aristocrats and insensitive capitalists. So horrified are our novelists that they cannot face up to the situation. Instead, they run away and invent brand new worlds which are, if possible, even more unreal than the imaginary monster from which they are escaping.

Charles Morgan,* for example. Those who have sampled his earlier writings will know what I mean in saying that he has the distinction of being the worst prose stylist in our language—but one must be a stylist before graduating as a bad stylist. Mr. Morgan's style is easily distinguishable—a combination of the a-logical flamboyance of the French metaphysicians with the more ghastly forms of English good taste. E.g.:

> *Sometimes when I see an extremely beautiful woman whose beauty causes men to suffer and who seems to be aware of it but behaves with perfect correctness as though she were a goddess from another world and exempt from mortal slings and arrows, I have been tempted to condemn her for spiritual pride and coldness of heart, but that, I suppose, is because I don't know what she suffers or may have to suffer.*

If anything could excuse the more prosaic goings-on of the Movement, it would surely be that they were reacting against this kind of ornate grammatical pedantry, feathered with clichés as it is, and muscled with foam-rubber sentimentality. Nor is the construction of *Challenge to Venus* any less laboriously ugly than the verbal mahogany that went into the making of it. The plot, though a mere excuse for meta-

* *Challenge to Venus*. By CHARLES MORGAN. Macmillan. 15s.

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physical prattle, succeeds in distorting the picture of Western civilisation as thoroughly as ten volumes of Marxist theorising: and this is the strange thing, distorting it in almost exactly the same way, although nobody could be less of a Marxist than Mr. Morgan. Tragic-opera Italian aristocrats masquerade as Italy while a gigantic bourgeois oaf impersonates Britain. Italian princess and English oaf get into bed together. Exit oaf, unaccompanied. He is off to Aden where, presumably, he will be "superior" to the "natives" and not just remain as one more National Insurance number in the Welfare State. And that's all, except for the "philosophy," and Mr. Morgan as a philosopher is almost as distinguished as Mr. Morgan the stylist.

MR. DAVID STACTON* is, for me, a more sympathetic writer. His prose occasionally attains a rigorous and compelling gravity that is very moving in spite of his subject-matter. But what a subject! He tells the story of Ludwig II, King of Bavaria, the man who patronised Wagner and built those vulgarest of 19th-century follies, Linderhof and Herrenchiemsee. His interest in Wagner has always been enough to put me off Ludwig; so, until I read Mr. Stacton's fictional biography, I knew very little about his subject. His book, however, gives me reason to congratulate myself on never having wasted time on such a monster. Apart from the public vice of encouraging tenth-rate art and the private one of seducing every young man he could lay his hands on, Ludwig appears to have done very little with his life—except lose his kingdom, murder his doctor, and commit suicide. One would have to search hard to find a more stylised incarnation of Western wickedness. Yet Mr. Stacton's sympathy is unwavering. This ineffectual psychotic is evidently what the West wants to be. Such self-criticism, particularly when it is unconscious, is more destructive than the wildest and most bitter attacks of the worst of enemies.

Mr. Morgan and Mr. Stacton share one quality, a plentiful lack of humour. They each deal with a situation and a personality that could, if properly exploited, soar into farce: but their four feet are firmly planted in the clouds. They fail to rise into a clearer air and, instead of being funny, they are pathetically ridiculous. Mr. William Eastlake† is another, and somewhat better, matter. He can be very funny indeed. Not all the time, though. When he ventures into the big bad modern world of typewriters and ballyhoo he becomes as maudlin as the rest of them—though in the crumpled manner of the American tough rather than with the dripping starchiness of an Englishman. He does not need to idealise the West like Mr. Morgan or mythologise its evil as does Mr. Stacton: but that is not because he is better able to understand the value of civilisation or more liable to come to terms with it. No. Mr. Eastlake has an open avenue of escape. He rides off into Indian country, the land of the Navaho, a people who have remained unconquered by the ideologies, though not by the armaments, of the West. Out of this country comes Alexander Bowman, bearing with him his brother's bride, a preposterous bitch whose bitchiness weakens the force of the whole fable. Brother George lingers behind at the trading station surrounded by Indians with names like Quicker-Than-You and Rabbit Stockings. These red gentlemen in jeans are obviously much more intelligent and better-mannered than the literary gentry who frequent the open spaces of Europe, which is seen as a wilder West where the man who is quickest on the page is supreme. It is in these civilised fastnesses that Alexander is driven first to success, thence to drink, and so to a melodrama in which he is supposed to get killed. (I can hardly believe that he is killed: death is more real than this.) But all that is unimportant: only the Indians matter, the mission Indian, the

* *Remember Me*. By DAVID STACTON. Faber and Faber. 15s.

† *Go in Beauty*. By WILLIAM EASTLAKE. Secker and Warburg. 16s.

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homicidal Indian, the medicine Indian, and the rest of them. "The whites don't think much. They got a lot of important things to do." And, indeed, the whites in Mr. Eastlake's book don't think much. They are far too busy going through the nonsensical motions of the plot. So only the Indians are left to show that Mr. Eastlake can think, and can write: and it is a pity, because Mr. Eastlake is very good at both.

BUT ALL judgments are relative. When I say that Mr. Eastlake can write I mean something by it, quite a lot: but I don't mean he is a writer in the same sense as is Mr. Lawrence Durrell.*

Like Mr. Morgan, Mr. Durrell is a stylist. But he is a good stylist. His experience is deep enough to underwrite his boldest overwriting.

> *There is no pain compared to that of loving a woman who makes her body accessible to one and yet who is incapable of delivering her true self—because she does not know where to find it.*

There we find him saying all that Mr. Morgan said—and a good deal more and a great deal better—but the words are little words and he does not need the pompous clichés. When Mr. Durrell lets himself go and opens his vowels full throttle there is always a good reason for it, and they always open harmoniously.

His book, though, is not as good as the way in which it is written. It purports to give an intimate, almost mystical, impression of a city, the city of Cavafy, modern Alexandria. The method is the love affair, an affair which entangles four people, four different nationalities or races—Egyptian, Greek, Jewish, and English. But the whole four are entirely dominated by one of the women, Justine, and none of the others seem to have an identity apart from her. The plot thus suffers from what Ezra Pound called 'an error, or excess of / emphasis." Mr. Durrell himself describes it very precisely: "What is missing in his work . . . is a sense of play. He bears down so hard on his subject-matter: so hard that it infects his work with . . . unbalanced ferocity. . . ." Where Cavafy, his avowed master, would have smiled languidly, Mr. Durrell is energetically tearful. And he cannot complain of the comparison. He cannot plead that it is very difficult to write as well as Cavafy. It is. But I pay Mr. Durrell the one homage that I can, the homage that his poems have made obligatory: I expect him to overcome the greatest of difficulties. And, therefore, I complain that in this book he doesn't quite succeed.

Yet that is not what invalidates *Justine* for me. Instead of the nationalities I think of the professions of the four lovers—a millionaire, a prostitute, a nymphomaniac, and, in a very apologetic sort of way, a schoolteacher. Most of the other characters are also millionaires, prostitutes, etc., with a smattering of consular officials and chiefs of the Secret Service. They could hardly be described as a typical group of Alexandrians. Millionaires and prostitutes, indeed, it is the Marxist dream of capitalist society, a city that is no more than a gigantic whore-shop, a city without merchants, or docks, or factories, or newspapers, a city where nobody works, except in bed, and where everybody lives on a diet of luxuries, except those who are starving. (Sorry, there is a doctor, a pox-doctor.) And this is the second error or excess of emphasis, a concentration on the exotic, the erotic, and, in the case of the Cabal, on the esoteric. It leads Mr. Durrell to the mythologising of an entirely unreal city; he castrates it of all its city-like qualities, its work, its material produce, and, by doing so, he feminises it in exactly the same way as he allows a woman to dominate his central love affair. One line of Yeats personifies the workaday Alexandria better than the whole of this book—and that, perhaps, is why Yeats, like Cavafy, retained his sense of play. There is certainly nothing so phallic as a beacon tower in Mr. Durrell's womanising and womanish city.

AND SO I rejoice to be able to come at last to the work of Mr. John Braine.* He is no stylist, either good or bad. He writes with a kind of weary brilliance, a chromium-plated manner which isn't meant to hide the underlying base of tin. But he is a novelist. His hero is an accountant—not a writer or a University lecturer, or even a king—and if anybody still believes that there is nothing more terrifying than a Scotsman on the make he should study this portrait of an Englishman. Joe uses all his abilities—intellectual, social, and sexual—to advance himself financially. A Scotsman would have had some kind of moral purpose, a purpose that would have been quite real to him however hypocritical it appeared to others, but Joe has nothing but a determination to acquire the good things of life and enjoy them. He gets them, only to find that he cannot enjoy them because he himself has ceased to be one of the good things. He gets them by marrying a woman of the richer non-U type, the daughter of an industrial magnate, but in order to marry her he has to desert an aging mistress who promptly gets herself killed in a very nasty car accident.

* *Justine*. By LAWRENCE DURRELL. Faber and Faber. 15s.

* *Room at the Top*. By JOHN BRAINE. Eyre and Spottiswoode. 15s.

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This death is one of the minor weaknesses of a strong book. Alice, the mistress, has been drawn, as indeed has the rich girl, Susan, with a lack of sentimentality uncommon in English fiction. The peculiar savagery of female love is beautifully represented in her, and the peculiar resilience of the rejected woman. Such a person would never have been content with getting killed. She would have got her teeth into another Joe.

As the hero rises in the world, English society unfolds before him, avenues of isolated little customs and narrow lanes of distinctions losing him by their resemblance to other customs and other distinctions. From mill-workers to mill-owners, from office boys to city treasurers, Joe observes them all with an objective sensitivity that is in no way lessened by his anxiety to get the better of them and his utter ruthlessness in doing so. His only blind spot is for the people at the very top. His RAF hero is a shade too self-assertive, too unsure of himself. Such a man, in real life, would probably have been very grateful to Joe for running off with the woman he had been destined to marry. But such slight errors, which are always kept within bounds by the fact that Joe is so presented that one never knows how objective his impressions are supposed to be, such errors do not interfere with the panoramic accuracy of the picture of English society which Mr. Braine has given us. It is not a pleasant picture, but neither is it as ghoul-like as Mr. Stacton's Ludwig nor as demoralising as Mr. Durrell's Alexandria. It bears an astonishing resemblance to the picture of Communist Russia which has recently been painted by such Soviet novelists as Dudintsev. The same a-moral material acquisitiveness is endemic. And it could be compared, as far as that goes, to the England of Defoe or the Russia of Pushkin. It seems to me that Mr. Braine has shown again that, by precise observation of the society that surrounds him immediately, a man can get through to an understanding of the goodness and evil of human beings, a goodness and an evil that have very little to do with the social conditions observed and in terms of which they are presented.

Burns Singer

AN UNHEROIC PICTURE

It is a common belief of today that supreme Allied direction in World War II compared favourably with that of World War I. The unsavoury political intrigue that surrounded Lloyd George, the conscienceless jealousy and squabbling for high command, even when the fruit of office could mean no more than presiding over the most abominable holocaust in history, the selfishness and irresponsibility of 1917 and 1918, were not matched, it is said, in the events of 1939 to 1945. There can be no doubt that this belief has much to be said for it. Sir Winston Churchill brought a magnanimity to the tragedy of the Second World War such as no one in power could bring to its hideous predecessor, and his example had a wholesome influence on others, but it is very much to be doubted whether great events, even when they concern thousands of lives, can really purge men's nature of pettiness. The diaries of Lord Alanbrooke and the memoirs of Dr. Dalton do not always suggest a continuously selfless approach to catastrophe. Perhaps when Lord Beaverbrook comes to write, as he promises to do, a record of World War II from his own ringside seat, we shall be as depressed as we are by what he has to tell in his remarkable book *Men and Power 1917–1918*.*

When press-lords publish they tend to get a good press. Lord Beaverbrook's reviewer in *The Observer* asserted that "the story must be told in terms of high drama and Lord Beaverbrook is the right man to tell it. He showed many years ago in *Politicians and the War* his supreme ability." Lord Beaverbrook himself asks that his book should be judged as record not literature and he must have been more than surprised at being acclaimed in the eminent weekly as a modern Racine. *The Observer*'s was not the only literary laurel to be flung. *The Times* associated Lord Beaverbrook's muse with the name of Tacitus. A more modest tribute came from Mr. Edelmann who declared the writing to be "as fresh as tomorrow's *Daily Express*" (indirectly a strange comment on the style of the supreme Latin prosaist). Mr. Walter Elliot pronounced the greatest and most august of titles over the book, qualified it is true by the first noun: "gossip of genius," he wrote in *Time & Tide*. The book had only one bad notice, which appeared in *The National and English Review*. It is worth recalling, not out of a desire to wound the author, but for the interesting grounds of objection taken by Mr. Kenneth Rose: "Each generation," he wrote, ". . . the world must blaze like Valhalla, that Lord Beaverbrook may describe how at critical moments he carried messages, answered phones,

* *Men and Power 1917–1918*. By Lord Beaverbrook. Hutchinson. 25s.

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drafted letters of resignation, flitted from ante-room to ante-room. . . . Some may feel that the price we have paid for *Men and Power* is a shade high."

This comment is manifestly unfair, but it brings out, as eulogy does not, the most important point about Lord Beaverbrook's subject-matter. The story he has to tell of the struggle for power during 1917 and 1918 is of the most surprising and unbelievable triviality. I do not think that this in any way proves that Lord Beaverbrook has a trivial mind, but it may well prove that he has something of the good reporter's mind. The book is not a great one as the eulogists would have us believe, Gibbon stands where he did, but it is a very interesting book and far more so than if, departing from his modest and self-declared rôle of witness, Lord Beaverbrook had attempted to strike the resounding lyre and take us for a majestic ride down the corridors of time. The moral of his book is an extremely unpalatable one and may recall again Lord Acton's words on the same subject. The corruption of power often finds its expression in uncontrolled peevishness.

One of the delights of the war (I do not underestimate its darker side) was the opportunity, for people like myself who served on a staff, to observe the effect of power on human beings. It was a sombre if instructive experience and the cause of heart-searching: is that how I would behave if instead of being a junior I found myself on the heights with only a little way farther to go towards eminence? The answer is probably yes. When I was unused to the schoolgirl atmosphere of conference over a certain level I confessed qualms to a friend who in the past had attended Ministerial conferences, the real right thing, in a secretarial capacity. He removed my suspicions that I had got into the wrong set. He said it was always like that, and for a long time, he said, he had found himself unable to believe that what was going on at such meetings was really happening, and still found it hard to believe as he looked back. The silly side of the great career is usually kept decently obscure, but memorialists from time to time let this cat out of the bag. Lord Beaverbrook is the latest to do so. The hero of his story is Lloyd George but there is little in this unheroic picture to make one join in salutation.

THE main merit of his bleak but fascinating account is that it is true. None of his facts has been seriously challenged except what he has said about the claim of Trenchard to be considered as the "father of the Royal Air Force." Lord Beaverbrook denies this claim in bold and cruel terms. So far, he says, from being the founder he was a "father who tried to strangle the infant at birth, though he got credit for the grown man." According to Lord Templewood, who was closely concerned with Trenchard's work at the time, this is a misreading of what happened. Trenchard was not opposed to the birth of the infant but doubted the wisdom of undertaking the enormous reorganisation necessary for its delivery on the eve of the Ludendorff offensive of 1918. Lord Templewood adds that Trenchard's real views were not indicated by his reluctance in 1918 but by his powerful advocacy of the new service in December 1919. This has gone uncontradicted. But the rest of what is said remains generally accepted.

The most appalling revelation in the book is the now famous episode of "The Lost Box." Lloyd George was accused of deceiving the House of Commons and the country about the strength of the British Army in France. The charge was made by the former Director of Military Operations, General Maurice. The Prime Minister defended himself in the most masterly fashion, routed the whole political and military conspiracy against him, recovered the confidence of the country, and at last enjoyed supreme power which he might have held for many years but for his lack of the deeper astuteness. The crucial debate occurred on May 9th, 1918. Lloyd George was able to defend himself against Maurice's damning charges with surety because he believed himself to be in the right. In fact he was in the wrong and General Maurice was in the right. The truth, the real figures supporting Maurice's accusation, were in an official box which Lloyd George's secretaries had omitted to open. The most extraordinary part of the story, to my mind, is that the truth of the matter should have lain hid for so long, for though the secretaries hastened to burn the papers when they found the box after the debate, their action must have been futile. Surely the same document was and still is to be found in War Office archives. It seems that there still remains something to unravel in this grotesque and perturbing story.

The villains are so numerous that it is hard to select a Mephistopheles from among them. Haig is perhaps denounced more thoroughly than others. In the pithy and brilliant potted biographies in the beginning of the book, Lord Beaverbrook says that with the publication of his private papers in 1952, Haig committed suicide after his death. William II at Doorn said the same thing of Bülow's horribly self-revealing memoirs. The gorgeous figure of Lord Curzon of Keddlestone suffers a further reduction and the vulgarity of his mind appears in his strong support of the "Hang-the-Kaiser" hysteria, a support he swiftly withdrew when he saw the way things were going. Reverence is

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not accorded to the much venerated figure of Asquith, though no new damaging light is thrown. The reader may feel that the author had no great liking for Arthur Balfour but the latter eludes both the onrush of the attack and the deflating pin. As always he sails through the history of his time unruffled, enigmatic, cold, and beautiful. There is a photograph of him pouring out his charm on a general and ranks of men in khaki. "It is just possible," the author remarks in the miniature at the beginning, "It is just possible that he didn't believe in anything or anybody." The man who comes out best is Bonar Law. The press-lords Rothermere and Northcliffe are handled with much sympathy, and Rothermere comes out as a more movingly tragic figure than the insane Northcliffe. The bias of the reporter is towards masterful men who started with few social advantages and made their way, but this does not mean blind admiration of the type. Field Marshal Robertson is treated roughly and the account of Carson is devastating.

UNLESS the reader is prepared to accept Lord Beaverbrook's rhapsodical estimate of the Welsh Wizard there is hardly a gleam of greatness anywhere in the story. There is nothing like Sir Winston Churchill's rousing of the nation in 1940, nothing like the heroic decision of that year to reinforce the Middle East from a lightly armed island threatened by invasion, nothing to compare with the spirit of D-Day. Yet it is easy to make a too harsh judgment on the men of World War I. The continual and sickening intrigues for office are not to be attributed to any special baseness of character in the men involved. They are the natural way of things in the absence of great and dynamic leadership such as Lloyd George was so nearly capable of, and so fatally missed achieving. Lack of leadership in a moment of catastrophe is bad, but assumed greatness is worse. The leaders of 1917 and 1918 did not pretend to be more than they were. They honestly believed themselves to be essential to the nation's survival, and their struggles for power were undertaken in an authentically patriotic spirit. It is hard not to believe that most of them were profoundly mistaken as to their merits. But in an edifying and majestic atmosphere, such as marked some Protectorate councils, and which the innocent junior at the back naturally expects from great conclaves; in such a stirring and solemn setting the leaders might have become very much more mistaken even than they were. Pettiness can drive out hypocrisy.

Little is heard of the frightful background, of the trenches, and the hundreds of thousands of deaths in the mud, the million journeys' ends. We are shown nothing in these pages of the "world's worst wound." A few years after it was over, Bernard Shaw made a fitting comment on Lord Beaverbrook's present subject. "Could you make our citizens pay war taxes," the Archbishop of Rheims asks in *St. Joan*, "Or could you make our soldiers sacrifice their lives, if they knew what is really happening instead of what seems to be happening?" "No, by Saint Denis," replies the Lord Chamberlain, "The fat would be in the fire before sundown."

Christopher Sykes

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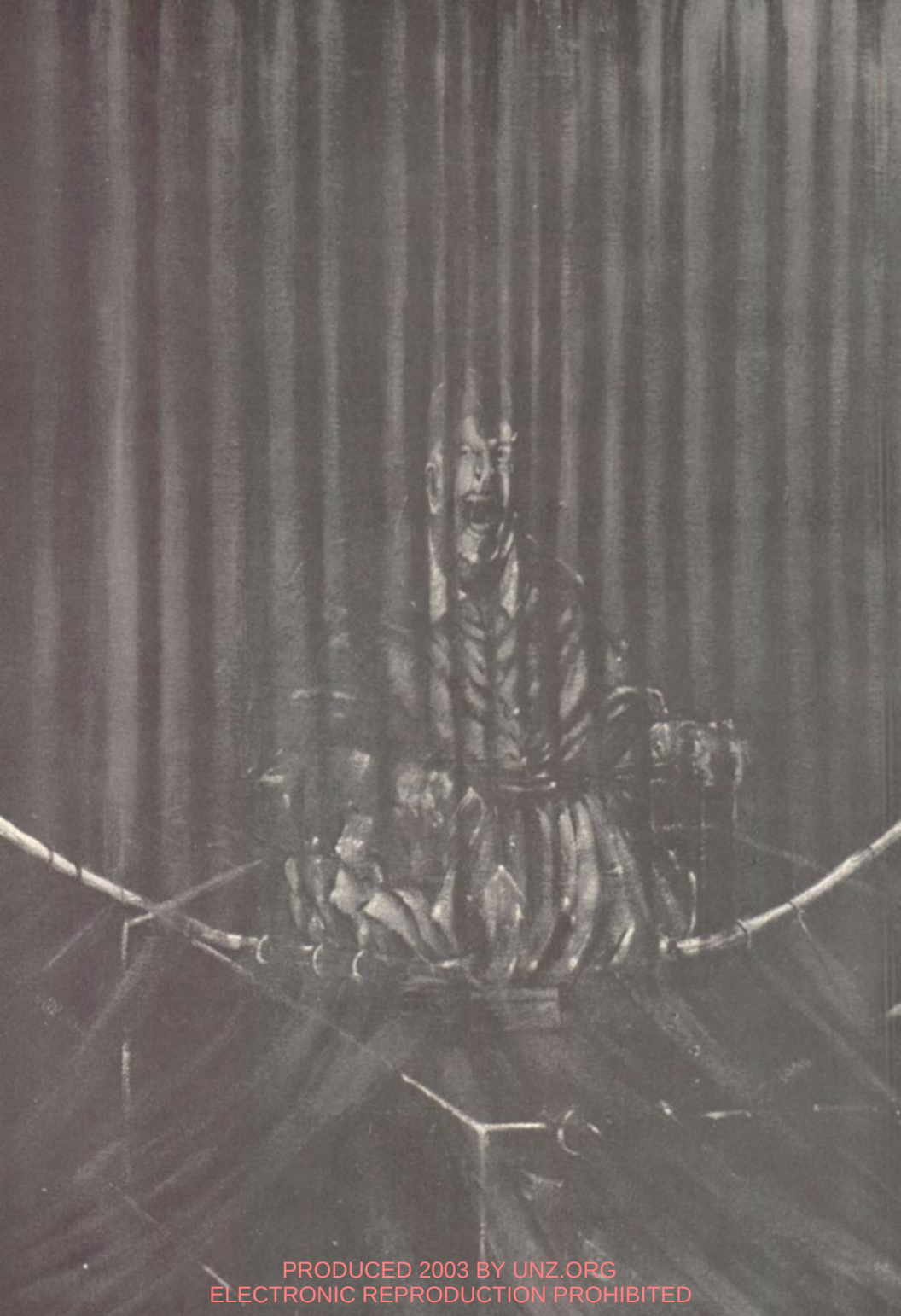

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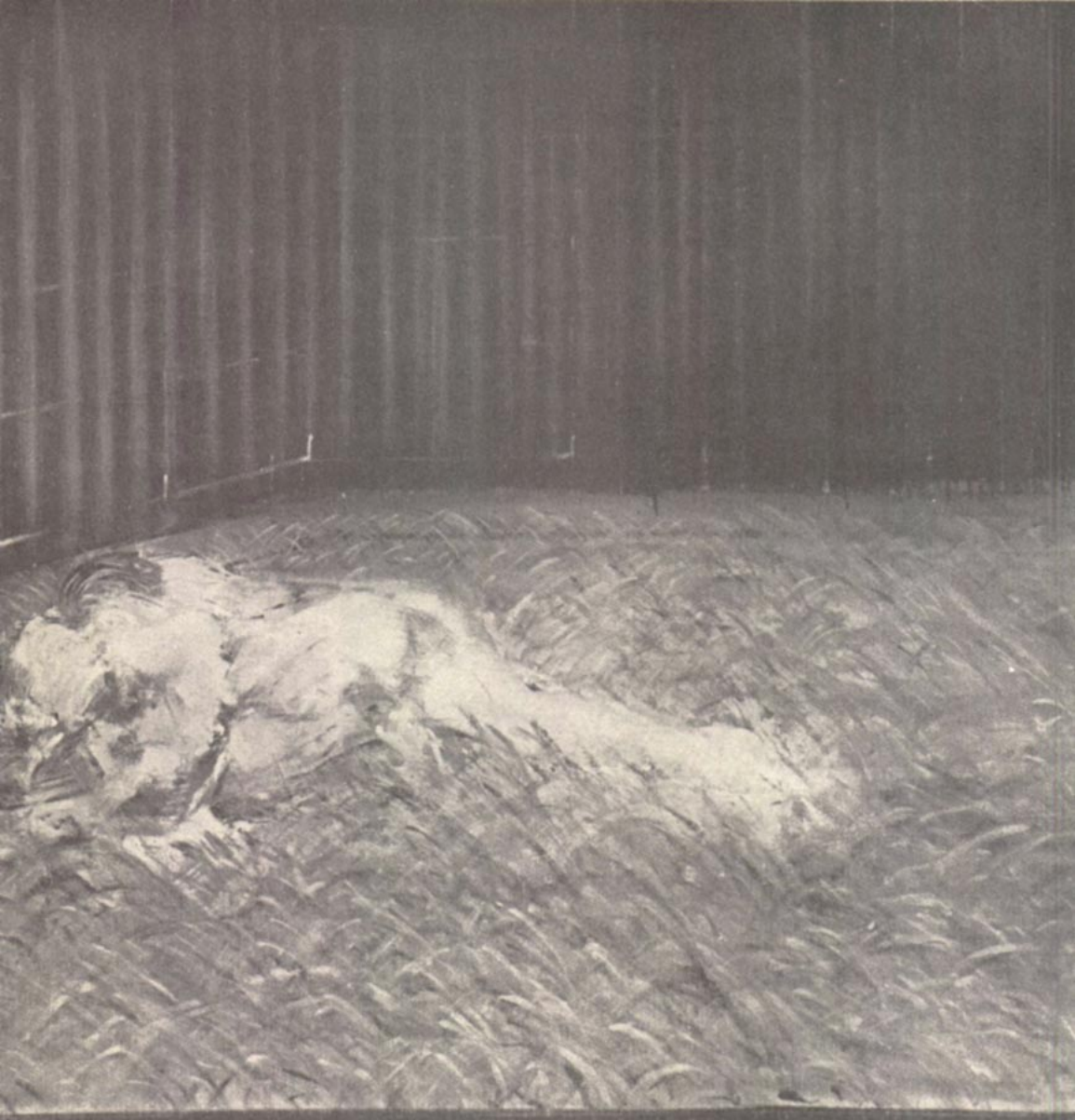

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ABOUT OUR AUTHORS

Mr. Marcus Cunliffe, who regularly reviews books on American affairs for ENCOUNTER, *describes himself as follows:*

"Why am I not an angry young man? Perhaps (born 1922) I am not young enough. In other respects the pattern fits, or ought to: provincial background, elementary and grammar schooling, Oxbridge, even my present teaching job as lecturer at a provincial university (Manchester). Yet I feel more like a contented lackey of the Welfare State, a flattered traveller on gravy trains. Other people's bounty sustained me at Oxford, where I read history. H.M. Government fed, housed, and clothed me (in khaki) for four years, then civilly obliged me to jump the demob queue and return to Oxford. By way of bonus it gave me an interest in soldiers that I still retain. The Commonwealth Fund nurtured me on two long visits to the United States. This time there were two incidental bonuses—an American wife, and a career in teaching and writing about America. The Social Science Research Council wished on me money to prepare a study of American military attitudes: I hope to complete this in the next year while basking in California at the expense of the Ford Foundation. A philanthropic publisher advanced some dollars for a book on George Washington which I have just about finished. A smug, a disgustingly supine record? No doubt: I simply state the facts."

SUDHIN DATTA, now in his middle fifties, is perhaps the leading Bengali poet of his time. He is widely recognised as the literary successor to Rabindranath Tagore, with whom indeed he made a world tour when he was a young man. In his poetry he has played a rôle—and achieved a stature—comparable to T. S. Eliot in English letters.

Mr. Ben Morreale writes of himself:

"I was born in New York City in 1924, and was educated at Brooklyn College and Columbia University, where I studied history. I left for Europe in 1951 and remained for six years. There I taught history at the American Community School of Paris for three years; at the same time I prepared my doctoral dissertation at the University of Paris—in 1956 the title of *Doctorat d'Université* was conferred upon me with *mention honorable*. It was in Paris that I started writing: a short story, "Hate," appeared in *The Paris Review*, No. 10. At the present time I have been engaged by the International Business Machines to compile a history of the world. It seems they have invented a machine that speaks, which will be exhibited at the Brussels Fair of 1958, and I must find it words with which to speak. However, I am limited to four typewritten lines for each year: apparently in spite of its extreme intelligence, the machine has certain limitations. I am also working on a novel, "Sicilian Ebbtide," which I hope to have finished by the end of this summer. Then I must rush to find a post teaching in any American college, before this infernal machine replaces teachers of history."

R. C. Kenedy has provided us with the following curriculum vitæ:

"Born in Budapest, 1926. Educated at Budapest (Pázmány Péter) University. Came to England in 1947. Two years ago he moved to Ireland, where, now, he is on the staff of the Queen's University of Belfast. Up to October 1956 devoted some time to writing a journal, based partly on experiences during childhood and adolescence, trying to prove that he lived in an age characterised by an absence of revolutions in European countries where every cause for revolt was manifest; how, in fact, it came to pass that the personal revolt did not grow into national movements. Subsequently has found time to speculate whether it would not have been better to be right. And if it is worth while to trace the birth of mistaken, preconceived notions."

ENCOUNTER is published by
Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.
7 John Street, Bloomsbury, London, W.C.1
for
THE CONGRESS FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM
104 Boulevard Haussman, Paris 8, France

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